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[1] J. Hansen et al. "Current GISS Global Surface Temperature Analysis." NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies (March 18, 2010). [2] J. E. Box et al. Arctic Report Card: Greenland. Internet. http://www.arctic.noaa.gov/reportcard/greenland.html (October 19, 2009). [3] Velicogna, I. "Increasing rates of ice mass loss from the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets revealed by GRACE." Geophysical Research Letters 36 (2009). [4] I. Allison et al. The Copenhagen Diagnosis. Internet. http://download.copenhagendiagnosis.org/ (2009). [5] "Human Impacts on Climate." American Geophysical Union. Internet. http://www.agu.org/sci_pol/positions/climate_change2008.shtml (2007).

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Derivative Thinking

It would be hard to find a taxpayer who doesn't know that AIG benefited from tens of billions in government aid during the recent financial crisis. It would probably be just as hard to find a taxpayer who could tell you what a derivative is. Yet anyone still stewing about the former should be up in arms about the latter. While the failure to regulate derivatives was at the heart of the AIG meltdown, the big Wall Street firms that create and trade these instruments are spending millions to make sure they stay unregulated in many cases. And they just might succeed.

To review: Derivatives are essentially a bet on the price of another asset, like a stock or a bond. Beginning in the early 2000s, the financial wizards at AIG used a certain type of derivative known as a credit default swap (CDS) to place big bets on securities backed by mortgages. The bets paid off handsomely as long as real-estate prices rose. But, as the real-estate market began to wobble, the securities started plummeting in value. That left AIG on the hook for billions in losses and brought the company to the brink of bankruptcy.

If that were the end of the story, few of us would have shed any tears. Unfortunately, these bets linked AIG to several other large companies, which were in turn linked to dozens of other companies through additional bets of their own. The upshot is that an AIG collapse would have threatened the entire financial system. The government propped up the company to prevent that threat from materializing, which is where your tax dollars came in.

It's no surprise, then, that Wall Street's would-be reformers have made derivatives a major object of their attentions. Above all, they propose forcing anyone who transacts derivatives to "clear" them through a middleman. The clearinghouse would stand between the two sides of each deal and prevent financial turmoil on one side from spreading to the other (and, potentially, far beyond). One way it would do this is by requiring traders to put up cash that could be used to cover bets that go bad. Currently, the companies that sell CDS, like AIG once did, don't have to set aside any money for future losses. This is a bit like allowing an insurance company to budget as though it will never have to pay out a single claim. Forcing companies to clear their derivatives transactions would bring that lunacy to an end.

To its credit, the administration made clearing a central plank of the white paper on financial reform it released last June. But, as the process of turning the white paper's proposals into law has unfolded, Wall Street interests have introduced numerous holes. To take the most glaring example, the financial reform legislation that passed the House in December includes an exemption for certain derivatives contracts in which at least one side is not a major Wall Street firm. Under one plausible interpretation, that means a big insurance company could use derivatives to make risky bets with Goldman Sachs, and the bet would remain largely unregulated, just as it was when AIG got in trouble.

As it stands, the bill that Senator Chris Dodd moved through his banking committee on a party-line vote last month includes a somewhat more hawkish approach to derivatives (though still not quite tough enough for our taste). For his part, the president forcefully weighed in around the same time, insisting that "all derivatives must be regulated" and vowing to beat back efforts to water down the bill.

And yet, one could be forgiven for feeling cynical about the fate of derivatives reform. On Capitol Hill, the Dodd language is almost universally regarded as a placeholder, soon to be supplanted by a bipartisan compromise between Democrat Blanche Lincoln and Republican Saxby Chambliss of the Senate Agriculture Committee, which also has jurisdiction here. The expectation is that any Lincoln-Chambliss compromise would be at least as porous as the House legislation, perhaps more so.

The basic problem is that the politics of the derivatives issue, like much of financial reform, are structurally skewed in the direction of Wall Street. Derivatives are obscure and complicated. Even those who appreciate the urgency of regulating them don't have strong views on the details of those regulations, which tend to be enormously important. As one derivatives industry lawyer told The New Republic this week: "Words on the page are not that critical to the public. … The public just wants to see something done here." The obvious temptation for Democrats will be to focus on the few elements of financial reform the public can understand—such as the proposed consumer agency that would police retail financial products like credit cards and mortgages—and cut deals on the rest.

Which means that the only way a tough derivatives measure is going to pass this year is if reformers and their liberal allies make enough noise to check the deal-making. Did someone say something about AIG? ◆

David Cowles

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Losing It

Political defeat and the Republican mind.

JONATHAN CHAIT

ONE DAY, just over a decade ago, THE NEW REPUBLIC was hosting a pleasant off-the-record discussion with a very high-ranking Republican member of Congress who was expressing his belief in the public's ability to assess its own self-interest. A colleague asked a clever question: If the public is so good at gauging its self-interest, and its interests were furthered by the Republican Party, then why did it elect Bill Clinton in the last presidential election?

The congressman disputed the premise that Bill Clinton legitimately outpolled his Republican opponent in 1996, and he began prattling off strange data points about ballot stuffing and other illegal tricks. Wait, another colleague replied, are you saying that Bill Clinton stole the 1996 election? His answer was "yes." (To give you a sense of the scale of this imagined electoral theft, Clinton won that election by nine percentage points, if you believe the official totals, which our interlocutor obviously did not.)

The most recent spasm of right-wing rage in the wake of the passage of the Affordable Care Act has set off a wave of condemnation. The trouble is that this condemnation has failed to properly define the particular mania on display. Democrats, in this case echoed by news reporters, have scolded Republicans for egging on unruly Tea Party protestors on the day of the health care vote, for a general breach of decorum, and for provoking physical threats against lawmakers.

The pastiche of complaints seems vague and unsatisfactory. It sweeps up legitimate behavior with illegitimate—what exactly is wrong with encouraging nonviolent protests?—and makes too much out of what, for now, amounts to empty threats from a handful of scattered loons. There is, however, something genuinely disturbing at work in the latest conservative tantrum. If the Democrats have failed to define the phenomenon properly, let me take a shot: Large swaths of the Republican Party simply refuse to accept the legitimacy of losing political outcomes.

The Republican Party greeted the Affordable Care Act with hysteria directed not just at the impact of the legislation ("Armageddon," was House Minority Leader John Boehner's measured assessment of the law's impact) but at its process. It was "an extraordinary abuse of traditional Senate rules," *The Wall Street Journal* complained. The passage was "undemocratic" and "un-American," insisted Sarah Palin. "It is a regime. They're governing against the will of the people … the Constitution be damned," thundered Rush Limbaugh.

TRB
From Washington

The caterwauling is difficult to fathom. President Obama ran for president promising to implement health care reform, and his plan was subjected to close scrutiny during the campaign, which he won with a clear majority. His plan became law only after endless hours of committee hearings, televised discussions, and floor debates. After a year of near-constant debate, a House majority and a Senate supermajority approved the legislation.

It is true, as numerous conservatives have protested, that the bill passed with no Republican votes. Numerous conservatives have pointed out that Medicare attracted 65 GOP votes in the House and 13 in the Senate. The implication is that the Democrats have grown more ironfisted than their Great Society counterparts. Given that Medicare was clearly structured in a more left-wing way (single-payer), the contrast tells you more about the GOP's right-wing lurch than anything else. Republican Party leaders and an enraged GOP base pressured Republicans in Congress to abandon all negotiations, and then, Republican leaders cited this abandonment as evidence of the legislation's radicalism.

It's likewise true that the legislation lacked majority support in polls. Given a terrible economy—which intensifies skepticism of government—and the lengthy, contentious debate, it's hard to imagine any other outcome for such a sweeping reform. The Republicans' sudden belief in the absolute moral imperative of obtaining majority support for major changes is hardly an enduring principle. Among other things, this requirement would retroactively nullify the entire Bush presidency on popular-vote grounds alone. (In a decade, Republicans have progressed from skepticism toward the necessity of representative democracy straight to an embrace of direct democracy, skipping right over such halfway steps as, say, reforming the electoral college or congressional malapportionment.)

The Republican belief that health care reform was not merely misguided but actually, in some deeper sense, stolen sits comfortably aside a recurring paranoia about Democratic malfeasance. Republicans bear not merely the partisan distrust that comes naturally in a polarized environment but an abiding belief that Democratic success can only occur through electoral theft.

These fears pop up with regularity. Within the insular world of conservative discourse, widespread Democratic electoral fraud is taken for granted. "They started importing Haitians the day before elections, and now—and now—and now the—they got to go out and scour the country for felons," proclaimed Limbaugh in 2004.

The assumption is shared by more respectable figures. "I think there are plans under way by the Democrats to steal this election," warned Robert Novak the same year. The Bush administration believed so strongly in widespread Democratic electoral fraud that it insisted its prosecutors produce evidence of some, and fired a slew of them when they failed to do so.

Thus the right-wing obsession with ACORN, a marginal force at best in electoral politics. Some ACORN staffers registered nonexistent people ("Mickey Mouse") to pad their totals, but the nonexistent voters never appeared at the polls. The fraud was committed by ACORN's staff against ACORN. Nonetheless, a majority of Republicans have told pollsters that they believe ACORN stole the 2008 election for Obama.

Lurking behind this paranoia is the fanatical populist conviction that their side has a monopoly not only on virtue but on the convictions of the American people. Of course, such a belief is not limited to conservatives, but those who hold the left-wing equivalent tend to regard the Democratic Party with Naderite hostility. Such fanaticism on the right has entrenched itself deeply within the Republican Party, a signature conviction of a bitter epoch. ◆

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The Mall

States of Anarchy

America's long, sordid affair with nullification.

HISTORICAL AMNESIA is as dangerously disorienting for a nation as for an individual. So it is with the current wave of enthusiasm for "states' rights," "interposition," and "nullification"—the claim that state legislatures or special state conventions or referendums have the legitimate power to declare federal laws null and void within their own state borders. The idea was broached most vociferously in defense of the slave South by John C. Calhoun in the 1820s and '30s, extended by the Confederate secessionists in the 1850s and '60s, then forcefully reclaimed by militant segregationists in the 1950s and '60s. Each time it reared its head, it was crushed as an assault on democratic government and the nation itself—in Abraham Lincoln's words, "the essence of anarchy." The issue has been decided time and again, not least by the deaths of more than 618,000 Americans on Civil War battlefields. Yet there are those who now seek to reopen this wound in the name of resisting federal legislation on issues ranging from gun control to health care reform. Proclaiming themselves heralds of liberty and freedom, the new nullifiers would have us repudiate the sacrifices of American history—and subvert the constitutional pillars of American nationhood.

The origins of nullification date back to the stormy early decades of the republic. In 1798, a conservative Federalist Congress, fearing the rise of a political opposition headed by Thomas Jefferson, passed the Alien and Sedition Acts, which outlawed criticism of the federal government. Coming before the Supreme Court had assumed powers of judicial review, the laws, signed by President John Adams, were steps toward eradicating political dissent. In a panic, Jefferson and his ally, James Madison, wrote sets of resolutions duly passed by the legislatures of Virginia and Kentucky, which called upon the state governments to resist and, as Madison put it, "interpose" themselves between the federal government and the citizenry. But the other state legislatures either ignored or repudiated the resolutions as affronts to the Constitution, and the crisis was ended by the democratic means of an election when Jefferson won the presidency two years later—the wholly peaceable and constitutional "revolution of 1800."

The concept was revived by John C. Calhoun, who expanded it into a theory of nullification and Southern states' rights in 1828. The specific issue at stake was a protective tariff that Southerners believed unfair to their section, but behind it lay a growing fear that the federal government might interfere with the institution of slavery. Calhoun declared that, as "irresponsible power is inconsistent with liberty," individual states had the right to nullify laws they deemed unconstitutional. He asserted further that, should the federal government try to suppress nullification, individual states had the right to secede from the Union. In 1832, the South Carolina legislature passed a formal ordinance nullifying the tariff. But President Andrew Jackson proclaimed nullification pernicious nonsense. The nation, Jackson proclaimed, was not created by sovereign state governments—then, as now, a basic misunderstanding propagated by pro-nullifiers. Ratified in order "to form a more perfect union," the Constitution was a new framework for a nation that already existed under the Articles of Confederation. "The Constitution of the United States," Jackson declared, created "a government, not a league."

Although state governments had certain powers reserved to them, these did not include voiding laws duly enacted by the people's representatives in Congress and by the president. Calhoun and South Carolina were isolated by Jackson's firm stand. The aging James Madison sided with the president, deploring "the strange doctrines and misconceptions" of the South Carolinians, charging that they were a perversion of the Virginia Resolutions and insisting that the "Constitution & laws of the U. S. should be the supreme law of the Land." (Madison also wrote of nullification that "[n]o man's creed was more opposed to such an inversion of the Repubn. order of things" than Thomas Jefferson's.) Other Southern states refused to join in the nullification movement, and Congress approved a compromise tariff bill.

Calhoun's radical ideas about states' rights resurfaced during the sectional crisis over slavery in the 1850s. The Civil War began as a struggle over democracy and U.S. government, focused on a key question: Could the slave interests in individual states, dissatisfied with the outcome of a presidential election, declare that election null and void and secede from the Union? Lincoln, like Jackson before him, declared such extreme views of state sovereignty a direct attack on democratic republican government.

After four years of the Civil War, in a "new birth of freedom" that resurrected the Union, Calhoun's states' rights doctrines were utterly disgraced—but they did not disappear forever. Nearly a century later, they were exhumed to justify the so-called "massive resistance" of the segregationist South against civil rights and, in particular, the Supreme Court's ruling on *Brown* v. *Board of Education* in 1954. The current rage for nullification is nothing less than another restatement, in a different context, of musty neo-Confederate dogma.

Following the *Brown* decision, James J. Kilpatrick, the pro-segregationist editor of *The Richmond News Leader*, dressed up nullification under the milder sounding "interposition," borrowed from Madison's Virginia Resolutions. Kilpatrick hoped that adopting lofty Madisonian language would lift resistance to *Brown*

ANTHONY RUSSO

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"above the sometimes sordid level of race and segregation." Despite his rhetorical sleight of hand, his intent was radical—supporting resistance not only to acts of Congress or the outcome of a presidential election, but also to the decisions of the ultimate court. Not surprisingly, not a single Supreme Court justice then or since, including the fiercest advocates of states' rights, has ever ruled the concept a valid response to federal law or judicial rulings. All have recognized that nullification under any name would leave controversial laws or court decisions open to state-by-state popular referendums—a recipe for chaos that would undercut judicial review, the cornerstone of American constitutional jurisprudence. And the justices have recognized the explicit language of Article VI of the Constitution, that federal laws made in pursuance of the Constitution "shall be the supreme Law of the Land; and the Judges of every State shall be bound thereby." Yet, in their last-ditch efforts to save Jim Crow, segregationists like Kilpatrick grasped and distorted the words of James Madison from 1798. In the spirit of John C. Calhoun and the Confederacy, they then vaunted their idea of "interposition" above the words of the Constitution, of which Madison is considered the father.

Kilpatrick's gambit caught on among his fellow white supremacists in Southern state governments—most notably Virginia's—and they passed resolutions of interdiction in defiance of the *Brown* decision. (The Alabama legislature went further, bluntly declaring *Brown*, "as a matter of right, null, void, and of no effect.") Those resolutions came to lie at the heart of what Senator Harry F. Byrd of Virginia announced in February 1956 as a policy of "massive resistance" to *Brown*. For several years, the strategy succeeded in fending off federal authority, resulting in mob violence against blacks and federal officials, as well as the closure of entire public school systems in the South—including the shutdown of public education in Virginia's Prince Edward County for five years, beginning in 1959. But determined efforts by the administrations of Dwight D. Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, and Lyndon B. Johnson eventually broke the back of the segregationist campaign. And, as early as January 1960, state and federal courts negated the Virginia nullification laws meant to implement massive resistance. Segregationists found other temporary means to preserve racial separation in the schools, including, for a time, the creation of private "segregation academies." But, in time, Virginia, as well as the rest of the South, finally acceded to the legitimacy of the *Brown* decision. The repudiated doctrines of interposition and nullification were repudiated once more.

Less than a year ago, on July 16, 2009, the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* ran an editorial apologizing for its role and that of its sister newspaper, the *News Leader*, in instigating and supporting massive resistance, which it called "a dreadful doctrine." It is all the more ironic that the legal fictions used to justify that doctrine should now be reappearing in new circumstances. "Who is the sovereign, the state or the federal government?" demanded state Representative Chris N. Herrod, a Republican, amid a recent session of the Utah legislature that affirmed it had the power to nullify health care reform. Last month, Governor Mike Rounds of South Dakota, a Republican, signed into law a bill that invalidated all federal regulation of firearms regarding weapons manufactured and used in South Dakota. The day before, Wyoming's governor, Dave Freudenthal, a Democrat, signed similar legislation for his state. Meanwhile, the Oklahoma House of Representatives resolved that Oklahomans should be permitted to vote on a state constitutional amendment that would allow them to ignore the impending reform of the health care system. And, in Virginia, the home of massive resistance, Attorney General Ken Cuccinelli, a Republican, has argued that a recently enacted state law prohibiting the government from requiring the people to buy health insurance counters federal health care reform, which, he insists, is unconstitutional.

Now, as in the 1860s and 1960s, nullification and interposition are pseudo-constitutional notions taken up in the face of national defeat in democratic politics. Unable to prevail as a minority and frustrated to the point of despair, its militant advocates abandon the usual tools of democratic politics and redress, take refuge in a psychodrama of "liberty" versus "tyranny," and declare that, on whatever issue they choose, they are not part of the United States or subject to its laws—that, whenever they say so, the Constitution in fact forms a league, and not a government. Although not currently concerned with racial supremacy, the consequence of their doctrine would uphold an interpretation of the constitutional division of powers that would permit the majority of any state to reinstate racial segregation and inequality up to but not including enslavement, if it so chose.

That these ideas resurfaced 50 years ago, amid the turmoil of civil rights, was as harebrained as it was hateful. But it was comprehensible if only because interposition and nullification lay at the roots of the Civil War. Today, by contrast, the dismal history of these discredited ideas resides within the memories of all Americans who came of age in the 1950s and '60s—and ought to, on that account, be part of the living legacy of the rest of the country. Only an astonishing historical amnesia can lend credence to such mendacity. *Sean Wilentz*

Sean Wilentz is the author of The Rise of American Democracy: Jefferson to Lincoln.

White Hot Bosporus

When Turkey gets cocky.

Ankara, Turkey

Turkey may not be a totalitarian state, but the streets of its capital city are reminiscent of one. From tall buildings around Ankara hang enormous, colorful posters of the country's founder, Kemal Ataturk, presenting an endless variety of noble poses and natty costumes. Here he is resplendent in a military uniform, there sporting formalwear with a white bow tie, here a dandy with a vest and a pocket watch—and always looming several stories above the street. His face also adorns every Turkish lira. At the enormous mausoleum built in his memory, all the clocks are permanently stopped at 9:05, the moment of his death in 1938, and nearly all of the country's major landmarks—the international airport, the Olympic stadium, the grand boulevards—bear his name.

This is not a nation with a sense of humor about itself or its founders. It remains a crime here to insult "Turkishness," and a visitor dare not ask questions about Ataturk's last years, by some accounts a nocturnal blur of booze and women that the historian Perry Anderson says left him "a ravaged lounge lizard." (In 2007, Turkey banned YouTube entirely after the emergence of homemade videos mocking Ataturk.) This despite the fact that modern Turkey has never been so self-confident: A period of economic growth dating to the 1980s has propelled a once-primitive economy to become the world's eighteenth-largest. Numbering 514,000, Turkey's military is among the world's biggest. And, as regional powers fill a vacuum left by a weakened United States, Turkish foreign policy is growing more assertive.

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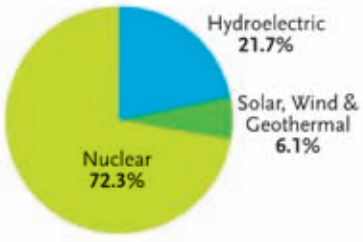

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"We are flexing our muscles," Selim Yenel, deputy under secretary of the Turkish foreign ministry, told me in Ankara last month. (I joined a trip organized by the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey.)

The latest example of Turkey's cocky new strut is Ankara's refusal to join Barack Obama's call for international sanctions against Iran's nuclear program. Peacefully stopping an Iranian bomb without Turkey's help won't be easy: Turkey holds a seat on the U.N. Security Council until December and may conduct as much as $20 billion in trade per year with its Persian neighbor. Yet Turkey argues that sanctions will have little impact on Iran while causing collateral damage to its own economy. After spending a few days in the country, one also gets the feeling that the Turks don't mind forcing the United States to kowtow to them, rather than the other way around. In the past, Yenel explained to me, "We have waited for the big powers to make up their minds on big issues and we just follow them. For the past several years, we have made up our own minds."

This attitude was a headache for Barack Obama to begin with. And then, last month, the small matter of genocide came along.

On March 4, the House Foreign Affairs Committee passed, by a one-vote margin, a resolution declaring that the massacre of up to 1.5 million Armenians by Ottoman Turks in the dying days of their empire was a genocide. In response, Ankara promptly recalled its ambassador from Washington and threatened to skip a planned visit this month by Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The genocide debate has become something of a perennial in Washington, with a similar resolution introduced in every new Congress, but the Turks simply can't get used to the idea that the United States might liken their ancestors to Nazis. (In part, this is because they fear not just the moral implications but potential legal claims from victims' families; even the Turkish president's official residence stands on a plot seized from a deported Armenian family.)

And, this time around, it did not escape notice in Ankara that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton didn't call the committee chairman, Howard Berman, to protest the vote until the night before the panel took up the resolution, even though it had been scheduled weeks in advance. "We told the administration that this was coming and to get involved as early as possible," Yenel grouses. "But they did not heed our request." When Clinton did call, "it was way too little, too late."

Barack Obama is personally far more popular in Turkey than George W. Bush was. But Turkey's political leaders may be warier of Obama than they were of his predecessor. The reason: Obama's stated belief that the Armenian killings were, in fact, genocide. As a candidate in 2008, Obama—influenced by his foreign policy adviser Samantha Power, who takes a passionate interest in the question—vowed that he would be the first American president to officially say as much. But, once Obama was elected, that idealism was quickly snuffed by realpolitik. At the urging of other foreign policy advisers (and reportedly to Power's dismay), Obama concluded that taking a moral stand wasn't worth the trouble Turkey could make for U.S. strategic interests. Instead of pressing the genocide question, Obama has helped to broker a set of protocols between Turkey and Armenia, calling reconciliation more important than adjudicating the past.

It's not hard to understand why Obama wants to tread carefully with the Turks. The United States relies on a major airbase in the country and transports supplies to and from Iraq across Turkey's southern border. Nearly as important is the vital diplomatic help the Turks provide the United States in their neighborhood. Turkey has herded Iraq's scattered political actors toward peaceful cooperation. Ankara was the middleman for months of peace talks between Israel and Syria, which were abruptly derailed by the 2008 Gaza offensive, but which could resume again soon. The Turks have also pledged $200 million to rebuild Afghanistan, and they have been hosting trust-building talks between Afghan leaders and their frenemies in Pakistan's government. Such a flurry of activity explains why Philip Gordon, the assistant secretary of state for European and Eurasian affairs, recently joked that, whenever he travels on official business, he is told that the Turkish foreign minister "was just here."

But Congress marches to its own beat. And a powerful Armenian-American lobby in certain key districts and states, like California, has managed to keep alive genocide resolutions in the House and Senate. Despite the stated opposition of the Obama team—including

As its relations with Washington have frayed, Turkey has threatened to deport 100,000 Armenians.

Anastasia Vasilakis

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Clinton, who, as a senator, co-sponsored the same resolution but has recently traded her appeals to historical justice for talk of strategic partnerships—the resolution may have enough support, including from Nancy Pelosi and Harry Reid, to pass both chambers of Congress. Resolution supporters also don't have to contend with the opposition of Jewish-American groups, which, in past years, have lobbied against the measure on behalf of Israel's ally, Turkey. Those groups have grown quiet ever since Turkey's fierce condemnation of Israel's Gaza offensive.

All this has the Turks in a fury. Not only did Erdogan recall his ambassador and threaten to cancel his trip to an international nuclear summit Obama is holding this month, he also chillingly suggested he might consider deporting 100,000 Armenian residents living in Turkey. One former diplomat to Ankara told me he'd never seen the Turks so angry with Washington. Unfortunately for Obama, he happens to need a big favor from the Turks right now.

A sanctions regime that might actually stop Iran's march to a nuclear weapon will require help from many reluctant nations, most notably China and Russia. But Turkey would be an enormously useful ally, both with its Security Council vote and with the political cover that the condemnation of a country with a majority Muslim population could provide.

Turkish officials admit that they are troubled by Iran's nuclear program—they fear regional instability and heightened influence for their ancient Persian rival. Yet they have also shown little interest in doing much about it. Turkey abstained from a November 2009 International Atomic Energy Agency vote that censured Iran for its uranium enrichment program, and Turkish officials openly doubt that sanctions will have much effect on Tehran's nuclear ambitions—that is, beyond cramping Turkey's own economy the way 1990s sanctions on Iraq did. (Erdogan has gone even further, exasperating Obama officials with his recent suggestions that Iran may be interested only in a peaceful nuclear program.)

Into this mix comes the genocide debate, which has poisoned the U.S.-Turkish dialogue about Iran. When I met with the foreign ministry's Yenel, I asked whether it was true, as I had been told during my visit, that some Turkish leaders believed the Obama administration didn't fight harder against the Foreign Affairs Committee's genocide vote because the resolution might offer useful leverage over Turkey's position on Iran. Obama officials deny this: "We have no interest in using these votes as leverage or messages or anything else to Turkey," Gordon said in a recent speech at the Brookings Institution. But the question prompted a knowing smile from Yenel. "It came to our mind," he said.

The suspicion cuts both ways, of course. To the United States, it seems that Turkey may be playing hard to get on Iran until the genocide issue is put to rest. Obama is due to issue a traditional presidential statement on April 24, the day Armenians commemorate their disaster, although few observers expect him to invoke the G-word. In late March, meanwhile, Hillary Clinton personally assured Turkey's foreign minister that Obama remains opposed to the congressional resolution, a pledge that has led to the Turkish ambassador's return and word that Erdogan will now visit Washington this month after all.

The grim truth for Obama may be that, far from playing games, Turkey is quite sincere on both fronts. Turkish pride remains an extremely fragile thing: Those laws prohibiting insults against Turkishness, after all, are not for show. It's easy to understand, meanwhile, why Turkey would prefer to tread lightly around Iran. Given the growing indications that the West lacks the power to block Tehran's path to the bomb, Turkey has little incentive to join a losing effort that may only antagonize a neighbor that may soon wield nuclear weapons.

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The story of Obama's troubles with Turkey may also be a story of America's weakened position abroad in the post-Bush years. Like other growing regional powers, such as Brazil and India, the Turks are stretching their legs in a world where American influence is at a low ebb. Defying Washington makes leaders look powerful at home while bringing few real costs. If he were alive, Ataturk, whose great historical achievement was to orient Turkey toward the West, might lament that his nation isn't in closer sync with that hemisphere. But he would have to admire Turkey's ability to make an American president treat it so gingerly.

Michael Crowley

Nightmare in Chechnya

A journey to the source of the Moscow bombings.

When it comes to war, it is a natural human tendency to identify good guys and bad guys—and sometimes, it is a sensible one. Around the world, there are, and always have been, conflicts in which the preponderance of evil clearly lies on one side: World War II, for example, or the 1994 genocide in Rwanda.

And then, there are conflicts like the one unfolding in Chechnya, where a government, having killed hundreds of thousands of civilians since 1994, is now running an authoritarian police state of the most brutal kind—and the other side is responding by murdering children and commuters.

I had only recently returned from Chechnya when, last week, Chechen insurgents sent two suicide bombers to blow themselves up in the Moscow subway system during the Monday-morning rush hour, killing 39 people. The chilling footage of that carnage brought me back to 2005, when I made a pilgrimage to the site of the massacre at an elementary school in Beslan, Russia. In the aftermath of that tragedy—in which more than 330 people, most of them children, were killed in a storm of explosions—I saw pieces of dried-up human flesh hanging from the walls where a female suicide bomber had blown herself up; I saw notes that parents had written to their murdered children begging forgiveness; and I saw scores of little boys' blazers, which had belonged to the victims, lying in a stack. Ten months after the bloodbath, one woman, whose apartment faced the school, told me she would never open her windows again. "If I opened them the wind would carry particles of burnt children into my apartment," she said.

The man believed to have masterminded the Beslan massacre was Chechen rebel leader Doku Umarov. The self-proclaimed "Emir of the Caucasus Emirate," he is one of the few surviving Chechen chieftains who have fought against the Russians since 1994, when the Kremlin sent troops into the secessionist region, commencing the first of two brutal wars. Russia officially declared the second conflict over last year—but neither side has really stopped fighting. Umarov's aim is to establish an Islamic caliphate that would be independent from Russia, would be governed by strict *sharia* law, and would span several republics of Russia's restive and mostly Muslim North Caucasus. For months

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Ignoring Russian law, Chechnya's war-lord-in-chief allows polygamy.

now, Umarov has been pledging to attack Russian cities. Days after the Moscow subway bombings, he surfaced to claim credit.

Umarov's insurgency is not an isolated movement. For years, international jihadists have fought and died in Chechnya, and foreign fighters are believed to run Taliban-style training camps in southern Chechnya's nearly unassailable mountains. Meanwhile, American troops in Afghanistan say they have faced off against Chechen fighters.

But, if Umarov and his followers are both depraved and dangerous, their nemeses are hardly better. Presiding over Chechnya is a Kremlin-appointed strongman named Ramzan Kadyrov; most Chechens, employing the strained familiarity that subjects often reserve for despots, call him simply Ramzan. I met Ramzan back in 2004, when his father was president of Chechnya. At the time, he was in charge of several thousand armed men responsible for his father's security. Both Kadyrovs were former separatists who had switched sides in 1999; the Kremlin, which had been looking for a loyal leader to represent its interests in Chechnya, embraced them. (Both Ramzan and the rebels are Muslim.)

My interview with Ramzan was scheduled to take place in a gym. When I arrived, the future president was boxing. He boxed for an hour, throwing punches at some guy in the ring, while I and several other Western journalists stood waiting in the sweaty air. Several Chechens had told me that Ramzan and his forces were operating torture pits and secret prisons, like Liberia's Charles "Chuckie" Taylor Jr., or Iraq's Qusay Hussein. Specifically, I had been told that Kadyrov occasionally tortured his victims personally, sometimes using them as human punching bags.

"If I had a private prison, I wouldn't tell you," Ramzan said, grinning, when he had finally finished sparring and graced us with the promised interview. Was it true that he executed detainees? "Naturally, if they resist, then . . ."—he whistled and gave the air a quick double punch—"*salaam aleikum!*"

A few months after our meeting, a bomb detonated beneath the grandstand from which Ramzan's father was watching a military parade, killing him. At age 27, Ramzan more or less inherited Chechnya, first as deputy prime minister, then as prime minister. Vladimir Putin appointed Ramzan president when he turned 30, the minimum age required by the Chechen constitution to hold the post.

Now 33, Ramzan rules Chechnya like a warlord-in-chief. On a whim, he creates laws and introduces holidays aimed at bringing the region in line with the practices of an Islamic state. Ignoring Russian law, he has allowed polygamy in Chechnya and mandated that all female civil servants wear headscarves to work. At the same time, he viciously persecutes anyone he suspects of radical Islamism. Ramzan is committed neither to secularism nor to fundamentalist Islam; his prime commitment is to stamping his own authority on every aspect of life in Chechnya. "No one dares peep," says Ekaterina Sokiryanskaya, a researcher at the Russian human rights group Memorial. "He controls everything: business, culture, what women wear."

Over a brutal approach to governing, Ramzan has plastered a creepy façade of normalcy—which I saw when I returned to Chechnya this year, for the first time since 2004. The capital, Grozny, features sushi bars, pizza parlors, and Internet cafés. Ramzan cuts ribbons at new roads and movie theaters, all opened with funding that comes partially from the Kremlin and partially from a special fund he named after his father. The holdings and sources of the fund are kept secret. Several Chechen businessmen told me, on condition that their names not be published, that a lot of the fund's money is extorted from local businessmen and wealthy members of Chechen families living outside the region.

I also saw the human cost of Ramzan's iron fist. One of the people I visited was a woman named Khava, whose son, Alikhan Markuev, had disappeared last August. One night, two unmarked cars

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carrying armed men in black ski masks cut off the sedan in which Khava and Alikhan were heading home. Alikhan—a skinny young man with dark, wide-set eyes—was in the back; Khava was in the front passenger seat, and another son was driving. The men dragged Alikhan out of the car, shoved him into one of theirs, and sped off. Witnesses who watched from their homes later told the family that they saw the cars head into a police station just a few short blocks from the scene of the abduction.

Family members searched for Alikhan for more than three months, filing countless reports and petitions with the police and the prosecutor's office, but no one would say where he was. Then, in late November, the police summoned Khava to identify her son's body. He was wearing a camouflage jacket, the kind often worn by Chechen rebels. Like a rebel, too, he had a long beard. He had been shot in the shoulder; his face was bruised. His eyes were open.

Law enforcement officials told Khava that her son had been a separatist fighter and was killed during a raid. They said they had evidence that Alikhan was a rebel. The evidence was the ringtone on his cell phone: the howl of a wolf, a symbol of the Chechen insurgency.

Alikhan did have a brief history with the rebel movement. In 2007, when he was 19, he had joined the insurgents. But Khava insists that her son surrendered to the police a year after joining the rebels, and she has government amnesty papers to prove it. "Cleared of all responsibility," declares the 2008 document she thrust into my hands. After that, say relatives and human rights workers familiar with his case, Alikhan had stayed away from the rebels.

It is impossible to verify the accusation put forth by Alikhan's family and human rights activists—that Chechen government forces kidnapped him, made him grow a beard, dressed him up as a rebel fighter, and executed him so that they could use his death as an example of their success in wiping out the separatists—but their account is a plausible one. "There is a fight going on against terror," says Kheda Saratova, a Chechen human rights worker who visited Khava with me. "Of course you have to show some results. These fake, created, and killed so-called fighters are the main proof." But, whatever the particulars surrounding Alikhan's death, there is little doubt in the mind of human rights activists that the government was to blame. "All the circumstances of this case leave no doubt that Alikhan Markuev was abducted and killed by officers of law enforcement agencies," wrote Svetlana Gannushkina, one of the founders of Memorial, in a recent open letter to Russian President Dmitri Medvedev. "The death of Alikhan Sultanovich Markuev is not an exceptional event in the North Caucasus, but a commonplace one."

Alikhan's story was not the only one I heard. An old man was executed in front of his neighbors last summer because he may have fed the rebels. Other victims have included relatives of suspected insurgents. I met one such man, Denilbek Askhabov, a 70-year-old tomato farmer from Shali. Last May, commandos gunned down one of his sons, who they said was a rebel leader, and kicked and beat the old man with rifle butts until he suffered a concussion and a heart attack. Three months later, the commandos returned to arrest Askhabov's other son, a legally blind greenhouse worker. Askhabov has not heard any news of this son since and assumes that he, too, has been killed.

Memorial recorded the abductions of at least 86 people in one-third of Chechnya during the first nine months of 2009—more than twice as many as in all of 2008, and nearly three times as many as in the year before. Some of these disappeared eventually turn up dead. "There used to be trials," Sokiryanskaya, the Memorial researcher, told me. "Now, they are simply shot."

Who is the lesser evil in this fight: the fanatical separatists or the fanatical dictator? It is an impossible question to answer. Yet it is abundantly clear who the victims are. The Kremlin says the war is over. The victims—in Chechnya and Moscow—know otherwise.

Anna Badkhen

Anna Badkhen's book about war and food, Peace Meals, will be published in October. Her trip to Chechnya this year was made possible by a grant from the Center for Investigative Reporting.

The Wasteland

People who like nuclear sludge.

Where should all the waste from our nuclear power plants go? This isn't a new question—quite the opposite, it can be shocking to realize how long the debate has dragged out. This past February, in San Diego, at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), some of the world's top experts on nuclear-waste management held a panel discussion. Papers were read. Exciting ideas unveiled. Yet some of the attendees couldn't shake the sense of déjà vu. "This was somewhere around the thirty-fifth anniversary of my first AAAS meeting on waste disposal," says William Freudenburg of UC Santa Barbara. "And almost everything is the same. Well, with one exception. Thirty years ago, we were hearing about a waste facility up and running in ten years. Now, we're hearing about a facility in Sweden that may get up and running in *fifteen* years. So, the big thing that's changed over the decades is that we've actually lost ground."

Indeed, lately it can seem like we've lost even more ground. Until recently, the United States planned to store its nuclear waste at Yucca Mountain in Nevada for thousands of years until it cooled and decayed down to safe levels. But Nevadans had fought against the plan from the start, raising concerns about earthquakes and the possibility that waste could seep into the groundwater. Even after 27 years of work and more than $13 billion in funding, Yucca had been bogged down in lawsuits and wasn't opening until at least 2020—if not later. Then the final blow came: Nevadan Harry Reid became Senate majority leader in 2007 and, two years later, President Obama decided to squelch funding for Yucca. Even if Reid loses his Senate seat this fall, many experts think it's unlikely the project will be revived.

For the time being, the demise of Yucca isn't a crisis. Nuclear utilities can continue to store their high-level waste onsite—at more than 80 locations around the country. The spent fuel is cooled in pools of water for several years and then placed in metal-and-concrete casks. In theory, this waste can be kept safe at these facilities for at least the next 90 years. But that still leaves a few dilemmas. All that waste will need at least 10,000 years to decay before it is safe, so, ultimately, we'll have to devise a longer-term solution. And, because the Obama administration is now proposing $54 billion in loan guarantees for the first new batch of reactors since the 1970s, the problem may become even more pressing. If nuclear power makes a comeback, then managing hundreds of different temporary storage sites could become a logistical—and political—nightmare. So if not Yucca, then what?

ANTHONY RUSSO

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In late January, the Department of Energy cobbled together a blue-ribbon commission to chart a path forward for the country's nuclear waste. But, for any plan to work, it will have to account for why the Yucca Mountain proposal went so horribly awry. The problem, it turns out, wasn't so much technical—most scientists would agree that it's quite feasible to design a long-term storage facility—as political. Nevadans had long felt that the Yucca waste site had been foisted on them unfairly, and they had a decent case. Back in 1987, the hunt for a long-term geological repository had been narrowed to three locations: a site near the old plutonium-production complex in Hanford, Washington; a site at Deaf Smith County in the Texas Panhandle; and Yucca. But, at the time, the House speaker, Jim Wright, hailed from Texas, and House Majority Leader Tom Foley came from Washington. So Yucca it was. That Nevada never felt like it had a choice in the matter made all the difference. "What's obvious now, although it wasn't always, is that, if a local community doesn't want you, there's not much you can do," says Rod Ewing, a nuclear-waste expert at the University of Michigan. "For a project that takes decades, the opposition only has to prevail once for everything to be put off track."

It's easy to gripe about NIMBYs, but Ewing points out that NIMBYs are a fact of life—many people get freaked out by nuclear waste, and that's just that. Other countries, however, have handled the problem more adroitly. Back in the 1980s, the Swedish government drew up a long list of locations that could potentially host a waste repository. Each town was given a chance to veto, and, after two decades and countless hours of local consultation, Sweden had two finalists that actually competed for the chance to host the site and reap the economic benefits. (One was picked last June.) Both towns, not surprisingly, already had nuclear plants in the area, and polls showed support running as high as 83 percent.

Granted, there are reasons why this process might not go as smoothly in the United States. As Michael Greenberg of Rutgers points out, public opinion on nuclear waste follows an odd pattern. People living near potential sites are often quite supportive (not least because they tend to have friends and family working in local nuclear facilities). But, as you move slightly farther away, opposition grows. So, even if a local community wants a nuclear dump, the state government may veto the idea. Still, there's at least one potential model. Currently, the only long-term nuclear-waste facility in the United States is the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant in Carlsbad, New Mexico, which opened in 1999 and handles the radioactive leftovers from U.S. defense facilities. As Roger Nelson of the Energy Department's Carlsbad office explains, the site was most heavily promoted by local residents, who were worried about the area's economy once its potash mines ran out. Eventually, they managed to convince wary state legislators in New Mexico to drop their opposition.

The people who live nearest nuclear power plants support them.

That points the way to a potential compromise, recently floated by Charles Powers and David Kosson, two engineering professors at Vanderbilt. They propose that the country's nuclear waste be consolidated at four interim facilities around the country, each picked via a Swedenesque process. There, the waste could sit for 90 years or so, giving it time to decay and cool—which would make long-term storage a bit easier. And, in the meantime, the country would have decades to figure out its next steps.

That might entail finding a new long-term geological repository. Or maybe we'd decide to reprocess the spent uranium to produce yet more nuclear fuel, the way France does. Or perhaps someone will invent an ingenious, high-tech way of dealing with all that waste. Bill Gates has recently been touting a prototype "traveling-wave" reactor that would eat spent fuel rods and generate electricity. Nevada Senator John Ensign has long pushed a sci-fi method known as accelerator-driven transmutation of waste, in which proton beams are fired at the leftover radioactive material to reduce its half-life. The Department of Energy has been tinkering with microbes that break down contaminants in groundwater.

The only trouble is, right now there are too few people working on these clever schemes; because the industry has stagnated for so long, nuclear energy doesn't tend to attract as much research interest these days. "I think of the bright folks I know teaching in engineering departments, and few are working on nuclear power," explains Freudenburg. That's especially true of waste, where the sudden shutdown of Yucca may have scared away the next generation of researchers. After all, how many budding Ph.D.s want to go work on a project that may get scotched by Congress in ten years? That makes getting the politics right crucial. Otherwise, we can look forward to another 30 years of provocative panel discussions.

Bradford Plumer

Robert Meganck

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Bringing the Heat

Forget cap-and-trade. Here's a climate bill to love.

BILL MCKIBBEN

THIS IS A TALE OF TWO BILLS—a tale that illuminates how policy-making may unfold under the most progressive administration, and the most Democratic Congress, in a generation. And it's not a tale with an especially happy ending.

The target of both bills is carbon. From early on, President Obama has indicated that climate and energy legislation would come second in his administrative batting order, only after health care reform. (Originally, he thought that would mean last fall, but health care was like a hitter who fouled off pitch after pitch. Since it took forever, we've gotten to the next priority with the midterm elections already looming on the horizon.) The intellectual problem is relatively simple: How do you put a price on carbon so that we burn less of it, and hence prevent the potentially catastrophic heating of the atmosphere? The political problem is immense: How do you change a system that has rewarded energy companies with obscene profits, and that has shaped the American psyche and landscape by providing endless, cheap fossil fuel?

The most straightforward answer, of course, would be a simple tax on coal and gas and oil. Europe began that approach 60 years ago, and, as a result, the continent has dense and livable cities, great train systems, and half the energy use per person. But we live in a society where "tax" is a scary word, and so, from the beginning, everyone has hunted for an alternative, a tax-that-isn't-a-tax. Both the bills I'll describe use the same basic mechanism: a cap on the amount of carbon that the country produces, one which goes steadily down as the years go on. The law of supply and demand stipulates that such a cap would raise the price of fossil fuel, which, in turn, would cause us to slowly Eurofy.

Bill One grows out of a strategy called "cap-and-trade." Credits granting the right to emit carbon dioxide would be divided up among factories and utilities and so on. The ones that are able to most cheaply cut their emissions would have extra credits to sell to the others, and, in theory, the invisible hand should point you toward the shortest, smoothest path to emission reductions. (The invisible hand aided, of course, by the guys at Goldman Sachs, who would actually do the deals.) This approach has worked reasonably well with nitrogen and sulfur over the last few decades, which is one reason our air is demonstrably cleaner than it was in the 1980s. Cap-and-trade has lots of problems (beginning but not ending with Goldman Sachs), but it's hardly worth detailing them because it's no longer really on the table.

In the House last summer, the so-called Waxman-Markey bill loaded down the original cap-and-trade formula with 1,400 pages of offsets and sweeteners and bailouts—it turned the reasonably straightforward into the highly complex. And, along the way, it offered one particularly crucial gift to the energy industry: Instead of having to bid for the permits to pollute, it'd get many of them free, sort of like the way we handed over the broadcast spectrum to the networks decades ago. It was an ugly deal—but nowhere near ugly enough for the Senate, where John Kerry needed some votes and so let Lindsey Graham and Joe Lieberman go to work with a vengeance.

By most reports, the cap now being contemplated will initially apply only to electric utilities, there will be some kind of minimal tax on gasoline, and factories will be exempted for a few years to delay any adverse effects on the unemployment rate. And there will be door prizes for nuclear, for offshore drillers, for the shimmering mirage of clean coal! As Kerry explained recently, in its new incarnation, cap-and-trade legislation is "primarily a jobs bill, and an energy independence bill and a pollution reduction-health-clean air bill. Climate sort of follows. It's on for the ride." In fact, the White House and the various sponsors now agree that "cap-and-trade is dead" (as Graham put it), and, for the moment, there's not really a name for Kerry-Graham-Lieberman, so let's call it what a software writer would call it: a kludge—a messy fix putting one patch on top of another until you end up with a gift-laden package that might, despite its near-incoherence, attract just enough senators to push it over the top. Think health care bill, but with vastly more expensive versions of the Cornhusker Kickback. And it may come with a couple of truly costly giveaways from an environmental point of view: The EPA would be forbidden to regulate carbon, and states couldn't do anything tougher than Washington allows.

Bill Two—of which we have an actual Senate draft, and one only 39 pages long—has actually been introduced, and by a bipartisan duo: Susan Collins, Republican of Maine, and Maria Cantwell, Democrat of Washington. It goes at the problem in another way. It would set a cap—but it would make the energy companies bid each year for their permits to put carbon in the atmosphere instead of awarding most of them as gifts. And then, it would take most of the money from that auction and—here's the weird part—uses it to write a check to every

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American every year. It's usually called "cap-and-dividend," though "cap-and-cash" has a nicer ring. Under cap-and-dividend, Americans would pay more at the pump and at the plug because Exxon and Con Ed would pass on the permit fee. And that's good—when gas is $4 per gallon, you're likely to ask, "Where's the bus stop?" But the check in the mailbox will make most Americans whole—seven out of ten would come out ahead, with only real energy hogs hurting. And, politically, it would enable you to more easily ratchet down the cap, and hence the amount of carbon in the atmosphere, in the future—every time you did, the price at the pump would rise, but so would the size of the check. And we *like getting checks*—even Sarah Palin would admit that the best day of the year for an Alaskan governor involved mailing out the proceeds from the state's oil revenues.

Now, this is far from perfect legislation. For one thing, its targets are tragically weak (ditto Bill One), though at least they're plausible, not a stew of offsets that let you claim dubious credit for some forest you've theoretically protected. For another, in a just world, those checks would probably go to people living in poor and vulnerable countries who are even now facing the effects of the climate change we've caused. (The international funding in Bill One is its best feature, though I'm willing to bet it won't survive the sausage factory.) Somehow or another, we need to make good on Hillary Clinton's pledge to send billions of dollars to poor countries already suffering from climate change. (For a really good idea, Google "Robin Hood tax.") But we also need a bill that cuts carbon emissions with enough vigor that islands don't drown and deserts don't spread—that's the most bottom of carbon bottom lines—and Bill Two at least sets up a plausible mechanism for proceeding down that path.

Cap-and-dividend will allow us to ratchet down the carbon cap, because people's checks will only get bigger.

In compensation for its flaws, the Cantwell-Collins bill is the kind of legislation you could actually campaign around. "In my ten years as a full-time, community-based climate organizer in the Chesapeake region, I've never seen an idea truly inspire average people quite like the cap-and-dividend concept," says Mike Tidwell, director of the Chesapeake Climate Action Network. "When I first explain it to people, they love it. They are relieved to finally learn there is a real solution that makes sense and can get the job done." Let me second that: In the course of organizing for 350.org, our global climate campaign, I've given thousands of talks in church basements and community college auditoriums. Cap-and-dividend makes sense to people—it sounds fair. It also sounds post-partisan: It's a new way of thinking about taxation that should appeal to conservatives as easily as liberals. It's even been endorsed by those insane, whacked-out leftist radicals at the AARP.

So here's the question. Why is Bill One, the porky kludge, viewed as "serious" and "realistic" and the center of the action, while Bill Two barely gets a mention?

One answer I heard from half a dozen people on both sides of the issue was surprising: "They're women." That is, Cantwell and Collins. One would hope, in Nancy Pelosi's Washington, that this isn't actually the cause. But what do I know?

The even scarier, and probably even truer, answer is that Bill One, Kerry-Graham-Lieberman, is seen as serious precisely *because* it's weighed down with a thousand compromises. "A cynical press thinks all these corporate giveaways make the bill viable," says John Passacantando, the former executive director of Greenpeace. "So this is the one that gets the attention, while the smart bill by Cantwell and Collins is ruled unrealistic from the start." Peter Barnes, the California entrepreneur who is the intellectual father of the cap-and-dividend bill, put it like this: "The assumption among D.C. insiders—including the big green groups—is that buying off industry lobbyists is the only way to pass a climate bill."

So, just as the health care debate began with the administration promising Big Pharma that any reform would not lead to negotiating prices or reimporting drugs from other countries, so energy legislation begins with a promise to the electric utilities not to interfere with their business model in any major way. And you can make an argument that this is what we have to do. Joe Romm, the indefatigable climate blogger whose collection of posts comes out between book covers this month under the title *Straight Up*, doesn't mince words: "It's energy-intensive businesses that hate [cap-and-dividend], and I'm afraid they drive the process more than the public. If public support mattered, we'd have passed a bill a long time ago!" If President Obama joins Kerry in pressuring senators to sign on to his bill, Romm says, we might get some version of it passed this year. "If we don't pass a bill this year, it is difficult to see a new effort for a bill before 2013 at the earliest."

Of course, you could also make an argument that a fired-up president could go out and stump for a new, innovative notion like cap-and-dividend, which is actually fairly close to the plan he campaigned on when running for president. If he did, he'd likely get lots of support—newspaper editorialists have shown far more interest than D.C. insiders. And campaigners—the kind of environmentalists who organize real people—could produce at least a modest groundswell of support. (That will be difficult to muster for Kerry-Graham-Lieberman—I've yet to meet anyone eager to take to the streets for a combination of nuclear subsidies and Wall Street enablement, even if it will start us slowly down a carbon-cutting path.) Most of the Beltway greens are backing Kerry, but regional climate groups have endorsed the cap-and-dividend bill; cue the AARP and you've got yourself a campaign. Hell, you could run for office on this thing: Vote for me, and you'll get green energy *and a check*.

It's more likely, though, that the lesson the administration will take from the health care debate is that it's enough to get *something* through—you can take a compromised bill, compromise some more to get the last few votes, and then claim a historic victory. (The current talk is that the administration may try to include a watered-down dividend as a small part of the deal, to pick up those two votes from Maine and Washington.) This strategy seems almost certain now that the president has announced his support for offshore oil drilling, stressing the need to "move beyond the tired debates between right and left." If any bill comes up for a vote, or so the argument will go, it will be the first real chance for congressional action on global warming, even if the climate is only "on for the ride." The pressure on any and all environmentalists and other tired leftists not to oppose it will be powerful. But it's hard to watch, knowing there's another path.

Bill McKibben wrote the first book for a general audience on climate change, The End of Nature, in 1989. A scholar-in-residence at Middlebury College, he is co-founder of 350.org.

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The Stevens Myth

Why has everyone fallen for John Paul Stevens's self-serving narrative?

JUSTIN DRIVER

Legal circles have been abuzz for the last eight months with the news that Justice John Paul Stevens had hired only one law clerk to begin working this summer. This move, Supreme Court watchers observed, strongly suggested that Stevens's thirty-fifth term at the Court would be his last. As journalists and scholars begin contemplating his place in history, Stevens himself has not-so-subtly attempted to burnish his judicial legacy. In a series of interviews over the last few years, Stevens has repeatedly attempted to portray his views as fundamentally unaltered since he joined the Court. This claim is somewhat counterintuitive, as he was elevated by Republican President Gerald Ford but has become the leader of the Court's liberal bloc. "I don't think that my votes represent a change in my own thinking," Stevens told TNR legal-affairs editor Jeffrey Rosen for a 2007 profile in *The New York Times Magazine*. "I'm just disagreeing with changes that the others are making." When Stevens encounters his old opinions these days, he professes keen admiration for what he sees. "We're getting to a point that our cases are revisiting issues that I wrote on 10, 20, 30 years ago," he confided to journalist Joan Biskupic last year. "I really have felt pretty good about re-reading the opinions I wrote many years ago. I have to confess that."

Commentators have embraced Stevens's preferred self-image, largely portraying him as an island of stasis amid a sea of dynamism. Adam Liptak dutifully relayed the justice's assessment in the *Times* earlier this month: "His views have generally remained stable, [Stevens] said, while the court has drifted to the right over time." But, while the Court, the GOP, and the nation as a whole all became more conservative during Stevens's tenure, these trends do not negate the fact that Stevens has also tacked hard to the left. Indeed, examining his early years on the Court reveals rulings that would be unfathomable coming from Stevens today. While his early record is habitually described as "quirky," it is underappreciated that this quirkiness often took Stevens in conservative directions—particularly in cases involving society's most contentious legal disputes. Rather than applauding Stevens for a nonexistent steadfastness and misremembering the justice that he once was, the legal left should instead be content to celebrate the admirable justice that he has become.

Puncturing the myth of Stevens's judicial consistency could also serve to mute some of the left's more overwrought mourning for the demise of country-club Republicanism. Stevens—with his wealthy background, ongoing devotion to golf and tennis, and membership at four country clubs around the nation—is an archetype of the GOP establishment from a bygone era. To the extent that some of Stevens's initial opinions on the Court can be viewed as articulating the legal views of the Skip and Muffy set, it becomes clear that searching social reform seldom originated on the back nine. Stevens, like many of his fellow Republican-nominated justices, took some time before moving decidedly to the left.

On the question of government's ability to take account of race, Stevens has attempted to maintain a veneer of consistency with some particularly intricate tap dancing. In a 1980 case validating a federal program designed to steer business to minority-owned companies, Stevens dissented and, in a notorious footnote, compared the program to laws from Nazi Germany. Stevens has sought to explain his subsequent embrace of race-conscious measures in educational settings by emphasizing the different contexts. Unlike affirmative action in business (where the group of beneficiaries is constrained), Stevens told Rosen that, in the educational world, "the whole student body profits from having diversity in the classes. So I really don't think I've changed my views about this."

During the course of his career, however, Stevens has voted both to strike down affirmative action in higher education and to uphold affirmative action in business. In 1978, Stevens wrote an opinion seeking to invalidate a medical school's efforts to achieve a racially diverse student body. Although he admittedly would have decided the case on statutory (rather than constitutional) grounds, Stevens appealed to the very same colorblind principle that motivates affirmative action opponents today. "The University of California through its special admissions policy excluded Allan Bakke from participation in its program of medical education because of his race," Stevens began in his oral statement from the bench. In 1995, moreover, the Court adopted Stevens's earlier skepticism of programs designed to aid minority-owned companies (albeit not his reasoning that such programs smacked of the Third Reich). By then, Stevens had changed positions, and he wrote a powerful dissent urging the Court to recognize the distinction between inclusive and exclusive uses of race. It may well be that treating all racial classifications identically "doesn't make any sense," as Stevens told Rosen in the wake of the Court's invalidation of two voluntary school-integration programs. If that is so, however, Stevens passionately advocated a senseless position for many years.

Although Jeffrey Toobin's recent *New Yorker* profile granted that Stevens has "evolved" on race and capital punishment, it nonetheless furthered an erroneous conception of consistency in other high-profile areas. The piece quotes former federal judge Abner Mikva, an old friend from Chicago, describing Stevens as fiscally conservative, but noting that "he was always a great progressive on civil rights and social rights." In this vein, Toobin asserts: "Stevens has always supported abortion rights and an expansive notion of freedom of speech." The truth, though, is a good deal more complicated.

In an abortion case decided in 1976, Stevens split his judicial ticket on two consent requirements contained in a Missouri statute. Although he voted with the liberal majority to invalidate a spousal consent provision, Stevens also sided with the conservatives in dissent, believing that Missouri could require a pregnant young woman under the age of 18 to obtain permission from her parents before receiving

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an abortion. One year later—over the dissent of Justices Harry Blackmun, William Brennan, and Thurgood Marshall—Stevens joined the majority in holding that states do not act impermissibly when they deny state Medicaid funds for abortions that have not been deemed "medically necessary."

Stevens's most significant early opinions as a justice involved the First Amendment. Over the last two decades, he has been a generally reliable defender of free speech. Yet this was not always so. In a 1976 case decided by a 5-4 margin, Stevens wrote a plurality opinion that approved governmental zoning regulations regarding where adult films could be shown, even if those films had not been deemed legally obscene. The plurality opinion rejected the then-prevailing categorical approach to speech and paved the way for increased content-based regulation. "[F]ew of us would march our sons and daughters off to war to preserve the citizen's right to see 'Specified Sexual Activities' exhibited in the theaters of our choice," Stevens wrote. It is a cute line, but it also articulates a test that, taken seriously, would permit the government to censor unpopular speech that is vital to democracy.

In a landmark free-speech case from 1978—also decided 5-4—Stevens wrote an opinion for the Court validating the censure by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) of a radio station for airing George Carlin's "Filthy Words" routine. Carlin identified seven vulgarities that were unsuitable for broadcast ("shit, piss, fuck, cunt, cocksucker, motherfucker, and tits"), and then delighted in exploring myriad linguistic permutations. Stevens reasoned that FCC regulation was permissible in light of the broadcast media's "uniquely pervasive presence in the lives of all Americans" and because the media "is uniquely accessible to children." Justice Brennan, joined by Justice Marshall, disdainfully dissented: "I find the Court's misapplication of fundamental First Amendment principles so patent, and its attempt to impose its notions of propriety on the whole of the American people so misguided, that I am unable to remain silent." Or, as the point might be pressed in the words of Carlin's routine: "I've had that shit up to here."

Turning to cases involving criminal defendants, Stevens told Rosen that his father's (apparently wrongful) conviction for embezzlement influenced his judicial thinking. This conviction taught Stevens "that the criminal justice system can misfire sometimes." Examining Stevens's first full year on the Court nevertheless reveals a justice who often appears unsympathetic to criminal defendants' rights. To select only one of the many available examples, Stevens wrote a dissent in *Doyle* v. *Ohio* contending that it should be constitutional for a prosecutor to cross-examine a defendant regarding his failure to offer an exculpatory story immediately after being arrested and receiving *Miranda* warnings. It is difficult to understand how such a view would not have effectively eviscerated the right to remain silent. Today, in stark contrast, Stevens views *Miranda* as sacrosanct, leading him in February to be one of only two dissenters who would have held unconstitutional a Florida police department's minor deviation from the standard warnings.

Stevens, today a free speech champion, tilted right in 1970s cases involving adult films and George Carlin.

Stevens's marked ideological shift merits scrutiny not least because he treads upon a well-worn path. In the post–World War II era, a strikingly large percentage of Republican-nominated justices have disappointed conservatives after being installed at the Supreme Court. President Eisenhower reportedly called Earl Warren's nomination "the biggest damn-fool mistake I ever made." Had Ike lived beyond 1969, though, he may well have reserved that ignominious distinction for another justice he placed on the Court, William Brennan.

In subsequent years, Harry Blackmun, David Souter, and, of course, Stevens became stalwart members of the Court's liberal wing. Apart from these outright apostates, moreover, several other GOP-backed justices have bucked conservative legal orthodoxy in prominent cases. Lewis Powell, Sandra Day O'Connor, and Anthony Kennedy have all at various times been deemed judicial traitors. If liberals have been disappointed with recent Court decisions, imagine how dreary constitutional conditions would be had Republicans competently selected justices to implement their preferred judicial vision.

The days of being able to count upon Republican presidents to replenish the Court's liberal ranks may well have, alas, come to a close. Unlike when Ford tapped Stevens in 1975, activists on the right are now fervently dedicated to ensuring that Republicans capitalize upon each Court nomination. Indeed, as recounted in Jan Crawford Greenburg's *Supreme Conflict*, it would be difficult to exaggerate how determined George W. Bush was to avoid repeating his father's ill-conceived selection of Souter. So wary of leftward judicial drift are conservatives that Bush—a man not usually known for either his grasp of jurisprudential nuance or his lack of self-assurance—expressed some uncertainty after nominating John Roberts. "I checked this man out," Bush said to C. Boyden Gray. "I just hope he's the same twenty years from now as he is today."

Almost five years into Roberts's tenure as chief justice, he and Samuel Alito have betrayed few signs of unleashing their inner liberals. After several decades of misfires, Republicans appear to have learned their painful lesson. Experience suggests that the line separating judicial turncoats from judicial loyalists—for the GOP, at least—runs along the banks of the Potomac. Over the last four decades, staunch Court conservatives have spent substantial periods working in Washington for Republican administrations before being nominated. In addition to Roberts (White House counsel's office) and Alito (Office of Legal Counsel), that list includes William Rehnquist (again OLC), Antonin Scalia (yet again, OLC), and Clarence Thomas (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission).

Many contend that sustained executive branch experience serves to inoculate potential justices from the "Greenhouse Effect." Judge Laurence Silberman famously invoked this term to describe the judicial machinations of conservatives that were designed to win praise from the liberal media as personified by Linda Greenhouse, *The New York Times* Court correspondent from 1978 until she gave way to Liptak in 2008. Perhaps tellingly, the modern Republican-appointed justices who have often sided with the left had their formative pre-Court professional experiences outside the Beltway. Unless future Republican presidents decline to select Court nominees who have been tested in the D.C. cauldron, it seems unlikely that anyone on the right will have occasion to rue the Liptak Effect. Although the sentiment has been badly overworked, it must be stated that, whenever he chooses to exit the stage, we may not soon see the likes of John Paul Stevens again.

Justin Driver is an assistant professor at the University of Texas School of Law.

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You deserve a factual look at . . .

Jerusalem (III)

Should Israel be able to build residences in its capital city?

A great brouhaha has arisen about a mid-level bureaucrat in Israel's Ministry of the Interior releasing a routine notice that 1,600 residences were to be built in Jerusalem. To the surprise of many, this routine announcement was construed as an insult or worse to Vice President Biden, who was visiting in Israel at the time. Mrs. Clinton, the Secretary of State, also was "shocked" and sent a "stern message" of displeasure to Mr. Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel.

What are the facts?

Capital of Israel. Jerusalem is the capital of Israel and will remain that whatever the final accommodation with the Palestinians may be and whatever the "world," including the United States, may desire. That has been understood and recognized by every U.S. Administration since the very birth of Israel. Therefore, to be "shocked" by an announcement that Israel will build housing for its citizens in its capital is strange. This is a trumped-up situation and puts the relationship with Israel with one fell swoop on an entirely different level. It is strange because the President himself has stated that Jerusalem should remain undivided as Israel's capital. So has Mrs. Clinton, especially when she was senator of New York and felt to be much dependent on Jewish support. It almost appears as if somebody in the Administration wanted to produce a "crisis" and was looking for an expedient way to accomplish that.

> "Jerusalem is the undivided capital of Israel…there is no reason at all why the Israeli government could not plan and build residences for its citizens…"

The Muslim Palestinians also claim Jerusalem, or at least its eastern part, as their capital. They want the city to be divided – as it was between 1948 when the Jordanians occupied the eastern part of the city – until 1967, when the Israelis liberated it in the Six-Day-War.

The principal basis for the Muslim claim is that Jerusalem does indeed contain an Islamic holy site, namely the Temple Mount (sacred to both Muslims and Jews) with its two mosques, El Aksa and the Dome of the Rock. It is the place from which Mohammed, who never in his life had set foot in the city, is believed to have ascended to heaven. But aware that it was the holy city of Christians and Jews, and wishing to convert them to his new religion, he commanded his followers to build a mosque in Jerusalem. But never in Muslim history did this mosque or this city compare in significance to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina – cities that no "infidel" may visit.

A tenuous Muslim claim. It is on the basis of this religious tradition that the Muslims designated the entire Jewish Temple Mount to be their holy site. The Israeli government, in its constant spirit of accommodation to Muslim sensibilities, has largely acceded to this tradition and has put the area in and around the two mosques entirely under Muslim control. But how would Christians feel if, instead of from the Temple Mount, Muslim tradition had Mohammed ascend from the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and if the Muslim Arabs were to claim that site as their property? The Christian world, often ready to consent to Muslim claims against Jews and Israelis, would be greatly astonished and would certainly resist such claim. But Muslim Arab assertiveness doesn't end there. On the tenuous claim of their right to the Temple Mount, they have construed a claim to the entire city of Jerusalem (or at the very least to its eastern part), which they have declared to be their "third holiest city." And, it would be an insult to all Muslims and all Arabs to leave the city in the hands of the "infidel Jews."

Jerusalem: Never an Arab capital. The city of Jerusalem – in contrast to Baghdad, Cairo or Damascus – has never played any major role in the political and religious lives of the Muslim Arabs. It was never a political center, never a national, or even a provincial or sub-provincial capital of any country, since Biblical times. It was the site of one Muslim holy place, but otherwise a backwater to the Arabs. The passion for Jerusalem was not discovered by the Muslim Arabs until most recent history.

But Jerusalem has stood at the center of the Jewish people's national life since King David made it his capital in 1000 BCE. After the return from Babylonian exile, Jerusalem again served as the capital of the Jewish people for the next five-and-a-half centuries.

Jews are not the usurpers in Jerusalem. They have been living there since the Biblical era and have been the majority population since the 19th century. Jews have synagogues and other holy sites in most cities of the world. But do they claim sovereignty over those cities because of it? Of course not! It would be preposterous and people wouldn't accept it. Jerusalem is the undivided capital of Israel and will remain so. That is why there is no reason at all that the Israeli government could not plan and build residences for its citizens – Jews and Arabs – in any part of the city. Those who get out of joint about that are either misinformed or looking for a pretext to create a "situation."

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What Are Nukes Good For?

In search of a doctrine for the new atomic age.

J. PETER SCOBLIC

The nuclear order seems to be falling apart. Gone is the uneasy balance between the cold war superpowers. We now face a slew of new nuclear actors. North Korea has reprocessed enough plutonium for perhaps ten bombs, in addition to the two it has already tested. Iran's centrifuge program seems poised to produce weapons-grade uranium. And Syria was apparently constructing a clandestine nuclear facility, before it was destroyed by Israeli air strikes in 2007.

It's not just enemies that pose a problem. India and Pakistan, which both conducted nuclear tests in 1998, have now each built several dozen weapons, deliverable by missile or aircraft. Tensions between the two nations remain high, and a nuclear war between them would affect us all—the climatological aftermath could theoretically kill enough crops to starve one billion people, according to a recent report. What's more, it is not inconceivable that an Islamist sympathizer in Pakistan could transfer fissile material or weapons components to Al Qaeda—a danger that would only increase if the government, already unstable, collapsed. A.Q. Khan, after all, proliferated nuclear technology to North Korea, Iran, and Libya, and, although he has been stopped, the illicit trade in nuclear technology has not. Globally, the threat of fissile material theft is so great that President Obama is convening an international summit next week to address it.

In this morass, there seem to be an infinite number of things that could go wrong. The problem is obviously not just the number of nuclear actors—it's that some of them seem quite mad. American security in the nuclear age has relied on deterrence—the idea that one nuclear state would never attack another because it knew that it would suffer a devastating retaliatory strike—but deterrence seems to rely on a basic degree of rationality that is not readily apparent in either North Korea or Iran, to say nothing of Al Qaeda. The Hermit Kingdom is run by a self-indulgent and often absurd leader who seems to have stepped from Ian Fleming's imagination, replete with repeated threats to turn Northeast Asia into a "sea of fire." Ahmadinejad, too, can be buffoonish, but, even if his calls to wipe Israel off the map are nothing more than rhetorical flourish, his country's embrace of suicide as a tactic—first during its war with Iraq, when the regime used boys to "clear" minefields, and then in its support for Hamas and Hezbollah—begs the question of whether Tehran might not someday launch a nuclear weapon at Tel Aviv, even though it would be destroyed in return. The regime's disregard for human life is made all the more haunting by the millenarian aspects of Shiism as interpreted by the Iranian leadership, elements of which believe that confronting evil can hasten the return of the "Hidden Imam"—the twelfth direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad, who went into occultation in 874 C.E. and whose return, it is said, will bring the establishment of a just society.

In the face of such threats, deterrence, never the most reassuring of concepts, seems downright inadequate—to both the left and the right. Conservatives have responded to these new nuclear challenges chiefly with military answers, emphasizing robust missile defenses, flexible offensive forces, and a doctrine of preemption that they hope will enable us to escape the vulnerability of the new nuclear age. Liberals, joined by an assortment of erstwhile hawks like George Shultz and Henry Kissinger, have responded in precisely the opposite way—by promoting nuclear disarmament. Concerned that the spread of nuclear technology threatens international stability, they have pushed for stricter limits on weapons, in the hope of slowing or even rolling back proliferation and reducing the opportunities for terrorists to get their hands on a bomb or its ingredients. President Obama, who has called for a "world without nuclear weapons," is thus pursuing not only cuts to the U.S. and Russian arsenals, but also the ratification of the test-ban treaty and an accord to end the production of fissile material for weapons.

In short, it is a time of great doctrinal tumult. And yet, it shouldn't be. Yes, the nuclear landscape has shifted considerably since the cold war. But the questions underlying the nature of deterrence and the utility of nuclear weapons are the same ones we've been trying to answer for years—and, in fact, the lessons from our standoff with the Soviets are of great relevance and import today. The principal danger lies not in the uniqueness of our current situation, but in the temptation to overvalue its novelty. In truth, the debate over nuclear weapons is trapped in a loop, and, as the administration submits the new START treaty for ratification, releases its nuclear posture review, and attempts to strengthen nonproliferation efforts, we're about to go another lap. We have had the answers to nuclear mysteries for a long time. The only real question today is whether we pay attention to them.

The basics of nuclear deterrence were established early. In a book titled *The Absolute Weapon*, published less than a year after the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Bernard Brodie, a professor and naval strategist, wrote that the atomic bomb had changed the very nature of warfare. A few bombs could destroy a country's cities, and, because no defense was perfect, any nuclear war was likely to result in intolerable devastation. This meant that our military goal had to be not victory, but deterrence. "Thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them. It can have almost no other useful purpose." Besides the capability to respond after an enemy attack, all that it seemed deterrence required was the rationality to understand the devastation a nuclear war would cause for all involved.

Unfortunately, it wasn't clear that the Soviets possessed even that modest degree of reason. Nikita Khrushchev, for one, delighted in taunting the Americans with the Soviets' supposed nuclear superiority, boasting that the Soviet Union was turning out missiles "like sausages." During the Suez crisis in 1956, he threatened the British and the French with "rocket weapons" if they did not withdraw their forces from the canal. And, in 1958, during a visit to Moscow by Hubert Humphrey, Khrushchev

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The lessons from our standoff with the Soviets are of great relevance and import today.

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asked the Minnesota senator what town he was from and then circled Minneapolis on a map, saying, "[T]hat's so I don't forget to order them to spare the city when the rockets fly." Today, there is a tendency to remember the Soviet Union as a known quantity—a "generally status quo, risk averse adversary," as George W. Bush's administration put it in the 2002 National Security Strategy—but the contemporary reality was quite different. NSC-68, the famous study commissioned by President Truman and written by Paul Nitze in 1950, warned that, when Moscow "calculates that it has a sufficient atomic capability to make a surprise attack on us, nullifying our atomic superiority and creating a military situation in its favor, the Kremlin might be tempted to strike swiftly and with stealth."

Deterrence, after all, was a defensive strategy which implied that one accepted the world as it was, and the Soviet Union, with its belief in world revolution, obviously did not. What's more, the communists, as leaders of a totalitarian society, were thought to have an advantage in the stealth that Nitze feared. (Long before Ahmadinejad used knowledge gleaned from his time with the Iranian Tunneling Association to push his country's nuclear program underground, Khrushchev, who had overseen construction of Moscow's subway system, thought to bury Soviet missile silos so they could evade detection and survive a nuclear strike.) Finally, Soviet losses during World War II were thought to show indifference to human life: Given that the Soviets had absorbed 20 million casualties during World War II, strategists like Albert Wohlstetter argued they would be willing to tolerate such carnage in a future conflict. Indeed, their basic moral fiber was considered alien. General Thomas Power, who had headed the Strategic Air Command, wrote, "Moral principles would deter us strongly from launching a pre-emptive war … but moral considerations and the prospect of losing Russian lives and cities would not deter the Soviets."

These critiques persisted throughout the cold war, but the Soviets were not the only ones making wild-eyed threats. The Eisenhower administration advanced a doctrine of "massive retaliation," whereby the bomb would be used to respond to a wide range of aggression. Ike's secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, publicly lauded the virtues of "brinksmanship," a strategy by which it was rational to seem irrational, in order to frighten your adversary into backing down. The war plan approved in the final year of Eisenhower's presidency allowed for the preemptive use of the entire U.S. nuclear arsenal—nearly 3,500 weapons—against targets in not only the Soviet Union but also Eastern Europe and China. In a 1961 briefing, Power, so critical of Soviet morality, joked to Robert McNamara, "Mr. Secretary, I hope you don't have any friends or relations in Albania because we're just going to have to wipe it out." In both its willingness to take life and its willingness to risk retaliation, then, the U.S. nuclear posture in the late '50s and early '60s was itself of debatable rationality.

Ironically, attempts to introduce greater rationality to our war plans only made things worse. In the 1960s—at the recommendation of a new crop of defense intellectuals, many practicing game theory, the academic epitome of reason—massive retaliation was replaced by a strategy known as counterforce, whereby the United States would fight a nuclear war just like any other war, attacking the enemy's forces and defending against its attacks in an attempt to limit and win the conflict. Its greater flexibility seemed far more reasonable than a "wargasm," as Herman Kahn derided the Eisenhower approach. But it didn't actually make nuclear war any more survivable. Targeting enemy missiles and bombers could never prevent Soviet retaliation because the Soviets would always make sure they had enough weapons to respond after a first strike. Missile defenses and bomb shelters were of little solace because study soon showed that they could be overcome easily and cheaply. Finally, if game theory suggested that counterforce was rational, it also demonstrated how ostensibly rational decision-making could lead to disaster. In a crisis, some advantage, however Pyrrhic, would accrue to the side that struck first, and, as theorist Thomas Schelling warned, the resulting "reciprocal fear of surprise attack" could lead to a nuclear war that neither wanted and that could destroy both. Rationality would not preclude catastrophe; it might well precipitate it.

As Brodie had feared, no matter what strategy either side pursued, a nuclear war would destroy both the United States and the Soviet Union. This condition became known as mutual assured destruction (MAD), but the strategy it suggested—a defensive posture designed for retaliation instead of attack—never became the basis for U.S. war plans. True, McNamara accepted the constraints of MAD—and they became the rationale for SALT I's limits on offenses and the ABM Treaty's restrictions on missile defenses—but conservatives hated the perpetual vulnerability that MAD implied and made it a political issue. (Indeed, MAD was given its memorable acronym in a *National Review* article, which argued that it was insane.) Others, like Nitze and Wohlstetter, worried that the Soviets could use nuclear superiority to throw their weight around, leaving us trapped between suicide and surrender. And, given that we were using these weapons not just to deter a nuclear attack but to deter a conventional attack on Europe, how did MAD apply if the Red Army came trundling through the Fulda Gap?

So, even as it realized the inescapability of MAD, the United States rejected it. The Nixon administration pursued new multiple-warhead missiles designed for warfighting, and the Carter administration introduced ever-more-nuanced counterforce options. Reagan argued that the Soviets did not believe in MAD and so he not only called for increased spending on offensive nuclear weapons, but pursued civil defenses and, of course, the "Star Wars" missile-defense program. His Pentagon, meanwhile, prepared to fight and win a "protracted" nuclear war. And, just as Schelling and others had predicted, these attempts put the United States in greater danger: The Soviets became convinced the United States was preparing for a first strike, and, during a NATO training exercise in 1983, actually concluded that war was imminent, bringing the superpowers closer to a nuclear exchange than any time since the Cuban missile crisis.

Everyone has assumed that deterrence is predicated on rationality. But it's really fear that induces caution.

The debate over Moscow's strategy did not end until the cold war did. But today, we have a much better idea of what the Soviets thought. Last fall, for example, the National Security Archive released a newly declassified study commissioned by the Pentagon in the 1990s. According to interviews with former Soviet military officials, the Soviet Union had realized by the late '60s that a nuclear war was unwinnable, and its strategy was far more defensive than ours was. Its doctrine called for a massive nuclear response if

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the United States used nuclear weapons ("all against any"), and, although the Soviets did contemplate more proportional responses, they "doubted that a nuclear war could remain limited for long." The Soviets constantly feared a U.S. first strike and thought they might be called upon to act preemptively. In other words, the Soviets did understand that a nuclear war would be mutually suicidal and therefore had to be avoided, and U.S. efforts to get around deterrence via counterforce were destabilizing.

Of course, one oral history is not dispositive. But, regardless of what the Soviets thought, nuclear war did not happen. That is, in the face of the most aggressive, most highly armed, most revolutionary power the United States has ever known, deterrence worked. It worked despite serious fears about the enemy's rationality. Indeed, it may have demonstrated that rationality is not the appropriate prerequisite for nuclear stability. Rationality can produce undesirable outcomes; it does not preclude crisis situations (Khrushchev was not insane when he ordered missiles to Cuba, he was just wrong); and in the heat of nuclear battle, rationality is unlikely to guide decisions in any country, regardless of ideology. Demanding rationality of our enemies is therefore both asking too much and asking too little. It is perhaps best that, as the scholar Kenneth Waltz has noted, "Deterrence does not depend on rationality. It depends on fear."

Fear, after all, is an evolutionary imperative in a way that reason is not, and it induces caution in a way that can be understated by cold cost-benefit analyses. No state that values its continued existence would launch an attack that meant its own certain devastation, and there is every indication—from their oppression at home and their manipulations abroad—that the leaders of Iran and North Korea have every desire to survive. True, historically, leaders have made strategic errors that resulted in their downfall. But they did so because they miscalculated their odds of success—an error that is impossible to make in launching a nuclear strike against an adversary that clearly has the capability to retaliate. The only plausible suicide would be an assisted one in which, say, Pyongyang's leaders feared total military defeat—deterrence does not cover "dictators in the mood of Hitler when he found himself in his final dugout," as Churchill once put it. That means the United States shouldn't push nuclear-armed leaders to the brink of extermination, but otherwise deterrence should hold.

ANTHONY RUSSO

For many hawks, however, the most troubling aspect of proliferation is precisely that it will markedly reduce U.S. freedom of action—that third-rate nations will suddenly become potent challengers, leaving the United States vulnerable to coercion. Thus, the real threat from an Iranian bomb would be not direct attack on the United States or Israel, but a raft of emboldened theocrats with ambitions to regional dominance. As Ashton Carter, whom Obama would appoint under secretary of defense, said in September 2008, "I think possession, even if [the Iranians] never use it, just simple possession is a disaster all by itself. I think it will change their behavior. I think it's a shield behind which they will be emboldened to do things contrary to our interests, and to the stability of the region, that they wouldn't dare if they didn't have the bomb."

There is some evidence that nuclear-armed states behave more aggressively. For example, in 1999, Pakistani forces, arguably emboldened by their nuclear arsenal, crossed the Line of Control in an attempt to cut off Indian positions on the Siachen Glacier. But, after weeks of fighting, Pakistan was ultimately forced to back down, in what became known as the Kargil crisis. Emboldenment is not the same thing as empowerment.

Nuclear weapons have certainly not given the United States carte blanche. Consider that, when Washington's nuclear advantage over the Soviets was greatest—when it had a nuclear monopoly in the late '40s—it was unable to prevent them from absorbing Eastern Europe and blocking access to Berlin. Similarly, the Chinese entered the Korean war in 1950 even though our atomic arsenal could have wiped out Beijing and Shanghai as easily as Hiroshima and Nagasaki. More recently, nukes have provided no assistance in Iraq and Afghanistan. If nuclear weapons yielded significant diplomatic or even military leverage, the United States would be a juggernaut, able to get its way in most, if not all, confrontations. This has not been the case.

That does not mean the United States and others have not tried to throw around their nuclear weight in an attempt to wield influence—particularly during crises—but evidence concerning the utility of such threats has been highly ambiguous. The tendency to rattle one's nuclear saber may be less a function of the balance of power than what strategists call the "balance of resolve"—the measure of how much a state cares about a given issue. And, because states care most about their continued existence, nuclear weapons are far better at deterrence (preventing a country from attacking you) than at compellence (getting that country to do something you want).

The explanation for why Iran would feel emboldened—that suddenly it had become immune to full-scale attack from the United States—rests on the false assumption that the United States currently uses the threat of such an attack to influence Iranian policy or constrain its activities. But we don't, and therefore removing it as an option would not change the status quo. As Negeen Pegahi of Harvard notes, "The spread of nuclear weapons carries real strategic costs for the United States: we will no longer be able to invade Iran or otherwise act to forcibly change its regime. That's the bad news. The good news is that this constraint on U.S. action will not provide new opportunities for Iran. Since the United States does not rely on threats to the survival of the Iranian state or regime to coerce Iran, the loss of these options will not embolden Iran." Besides, to the extent that the United States has implicitly threatened Iranian regime change—for example, through comments about keeping "all options on the table"—it has clearly been ineffective. Not only has Iran accelerated its nuclear efforts, but it remains "the most significant state sponsor of terrorism," according to the State Department, and it has challenged U.S. ships in the Gulf. In other words, Iran is already quite bold.

Even if a nuclear-armed Iran were more aggressive, the United States could still deal with it forcefully. India and Pakistan, after all, fought directly and bloodily even when both states had nuclear weapons; and an Iranian incursion into a neighboring country could be met with force. Indeed, non-nuclear states have attacked nuclear states without apocalyptic consequences: In 1973, Israel's nascent nuclear capability was not enough to prevent Egypt and Syria from attacking it, and, of course, in the subsequent decades it has found itself under near-constant challenge from state-sponsored terrorism and even missile attack during the Gulf war. Nor are nuclear states immune from nonmilitary regime-change efforts—there is no reason we could not support the Green Movement in a nuclear-armed Iran. We simply lose the

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ability to invade or militarily overthrow the regime. Which makes the rationale for attacking Iran's nuclear program seem vaguely ridiculous: Regardless of whether we stopped or even delayed the program, we would essentially be taking military action against Iran in order to preserve our ability to take military action against Iran.

But the situation raises an important question as well: If nuclear deterrence is stable and if nuclear weapons don't provide their owners a measurable increase in influence, why worry at all about proliferation?

On the evening of September 26, 1983, Stanislav Petrov, a lieutenant colonel in the Soviet Union's Strategic Rocket Forces, was on duty in the early warning station he commanded. It was a fraught period in U.S.-Soviet relations. In March, Reagan had called the Soviet Union an "evil empire"; U.S. Pershing missiles were on their way to Europe; and, only three weeks earlier, the Soviets had shot down a Korean Airlines jet. The Soviet premier at the time was Yuri Andropov, a former spy and unrepentant paranoid who thought it entirely possible that the Americans would someday launch a first strike. It was amid this tension, as David Hoffman recounts in his book *The Dead Hand*, that Petrov's warning panel began repeatedly flashing the word LAUNCH, indicating that American ICBMs were inbound. Petrov had only minutes to decide what to do; a missile fired from the continental United States would take only half an hour to reach the Soviet Union, giving the Soviets little time to authenticate an attack and launch their own missiles before they were destroyed on the ground. After reviewing other data, Petrov took a risk and declared the "attack" a false alarm, despite what his instruments said. He was right, of course, but, given the available information—or a more panicked state of mind—he could easily have gone the other way.

It is important to remember moments like Petrov's because, despite the general stability of deterrence and the limited diplomatic and military utility of nuclear weapons, they remain an enormous threat. Yet some have taken the relative peace of the nuclear age as a sign that we can relax. A recent article in the prestigious journal *International Security*, for example, lamented the prevalence of "nuclear alarmism," and, last year, scholar John Mueller published a book titled *Atomic Obsession*, which argued that fears of nuclear weapons are baseless. Kenneth Waltz has long and famously argued that "more may be better"—that is, he has lauded the *benefits* of nuclear proliferation—and his argument is experiencing a resurgence. Last August, *Newsweek* ran a story headlined: "WHY OBAMA SHOULD LEARN TO LOVE THE BOMB."

Waltz and his fellow travelers present a simple and persuasive line of reasoning: Because they make the prospect of all-out war unthinkable, nuclear weapons keep the peace, or at least limit conflict. States can fight only for small gains because any attack against the vital interests of an adversary risks nuclear retaliation. Certainly, the United States and the Soviet Union tried to avoid war, fighting only via proxies despite mutual antagonism and conflicting interests, and the result was a tenuous peace.

Beneath the cold war's veneer of "nuclear stability," however, lay significant volatility. Stability relied on the belief that each side's ability to retaliate against a first strike made war unthinkable, but, although the United States and the Soviet Union both had that capability, neither ever felt secure. The result was an arms race in which relations were undermined by fear and pocked by world-threatening crises—as in 1962, when Soviet missiles were discovered in Cuba, and in 1983, when Moscow mistook that NATO exercise as preparation for a U.S. first strike. Each of these incidents was a crisis precisely because one or both sides feared that war, whatever its consequences, was not "unthinkable."

One could argue that, however frightening such episodes were, they were resolved without recourse to nuclear weapons—proving Waltz's point. Indeed, some South Asia scholars, like Šumit Ganguly in his new book *India, Pakistan, and the Bomb*, argue that, even though nuclear weapons may have encouraged Pakistan to pursue its revanchist claims, they also kept a lid on the resulting conflict, via what political scientists call the stability-instability paradox. During the Kargil crisis, for example, Indian policymakers not only rejected an all-out conventional assault against Pakistan, they made sure their troops limited their attack to Pakistani forces on the Indian side of the Line of Control. And yet, the peaceful resolution of cold war crises often seemed less a function of caution than of luck, in no small part because states are not always in control of their own actions. The care that deterrence requires often flounders amid the absurdity of the human experience.

The Cuban missile crisis, for example, was plagued by accidents and freelancing. In the middle of the "13 days," officers at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California mated nuclear warheads to nine of their ten Titan, Atlas, and Minuteman missiles—an act that the Soviets could reasonably have perceived as preparations for launch. As if that weren't enough, they then went ahead on October 26 with a pre-scheduled flight test, actually launching the tenth ICBM over the Pacific. On the tensest day of the crisis, Soviet troops in Cuba shot down a U-2 on a reconnaissance mission, a provocation that Khrushchev later lamented. The shootdown led the Joint Chiefs to redouble their arguments for an air strike on the island—a move that could have resulted in nuclear war because Khrushchev's field commander had deployed tactical nuclear weapons and might well have used them. Kennedy wasn't fully in control of the U.S. nuclear arsenal, either: According to Stanford political scientist Scott Sagan, during the crisis, Air Force officers in Montana "jerry-rigged their Minuteman missiles to give themselves the independent ability to launch missiles immediately," in gross violation of military regulations.

In January, peace activists broke into a NATO base where U.S. tactical nuclear weapons are stored.

Whatever stability they provide, then, nuclear weapons also generate a distinctly non-trivial chance of total catastrophe, and today, that chance is accentuated by the threat from nuclear terrorism. It is unlikely, but certainly not inconceivable, that a state like Iran, long a sponsor of terrorism, could share nuclear technology with radicals—or that a radical sympathizer could divert fissile material from one of its enrichment facilities. States have long had trouble maintaining a perfect grip on their arsenals. When the Soviet Union broke up, it found itself riddled with poorly guarded weapons and fissile material that we are still struggling to lock up today. Pakistan's government insists that its arsenal is secure, but the government itself is not secure. Even the U.S. arsenal has suffered numerous accidents and security prob-

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lems (most notably the loss of eleven nuclear bombs during the cold war), and, in January, a group of peace activists managed to break into a NATO base where U.S. tactical nuclear weapons are stored.

Deterrence, then, whatever its strength, is susceptible to Murphy's Law. Shit happens, it happens with remarkable frequency, it happens even when the consequences could be nothing less than the destruction of an entire country or worse, and it is obviously more likely to happen when more states have nuclear weapons.

If the history of nuclear weapons contains clear lessons, those lessons don't provide simple answers. Deterrence is strong but imperfect. Nuclear weapons are an excellent defense, but of debatable influence. We can likely live with proliferation, but we should fight it fiercely because the chance of error grows with every new nuclear state. Formulating policy that incorporates these complexities is challenging, particularly when it comes to nuclear terrorism.

Nuclear deterrence is of little utility against terrorists, who, unlike states, lack a "return address"—a city or other suitably valuable target that could be destroyed in retaliation. It might be possible to retaliate against the terrorists themselves, but that is not a mission for nuclear weapons; and, if U.S. military efforts to date had failed to deter them, it is unclear why further threats of punishment would. The more effective deterrent might be defensive rather than punitive, raising the difficulty of mounting an attack—whether by preventing access to fissile material or installing radiation monitors in ports or anything in between—to convince a would-be nuclear terrorist that the low odds of success would not be worth the effort.

The United States could threaten—indeed, the Bush administration did threaten—to retaliate against any state that helps a terrorist carry out a nuclear attack. (Terrorists don't have the ability to produce the highly enriched uranium or plutonium needed to build a bomb, so a state has to be involved, wittingly or not.) But, as Michael Levi of the Council on Foreign Relations has pointed out, even threatening to retaliate against states that aid in a nuclear terrorist attack could undermine the cooperation on nuclear security that we currently have with Russia and Pakistan. In fact, it could, perversely, discourage them from reporting any theft of fissile material out of fear they would be held accountable for its use, thereby reducing the chances of recovering that material before it was used. True, such a threat might scare Iran and North Korea, with whom we have little cooperation anyway, into jealously guarding their nuclear material. But, even then, a threat might be less than credible: Despite advances in nuclear forensics—the study of the signature produced by each enrichment and reprocessing facility—our ability to trace fissile material to its source is imperfect.

The good news is that America's ability to deter other nuclear states is stronger than it was during the cold war. Not only do we need not fear a nuclear war with the Soviets, we no longer need nuclear weapons to offset enemy conventional weapons. Our new START agreement with Russia only further stabilizes the countries' nuclear relationship, adding predictability and transparency to it; and the 1,550 deployed warheads we will retain are more than enough for any conceivable mission—certainly enough to deter Iran and North Korea. Conservatives, however, fearing the fragility of deterrence and the possibility of blackmail by rogue states, have argued for a more aggressive nuclear posture. The Bush administration called for improved offensive weapons, including new low-yield and bunker-busting bombs; robust, multi-tiered missile defenses; and a nuclear doctrine that emphasized preemption over retaliation. Much as during the cold war, the right hopes not simply to strengthen deterrence by preparing to fight a nuclear war, but to escape it, eliding the vulnerability we feel when an enemy has nuclear weapons.

It's an understandable instinct, and there is some reason to believe that counterforce could be more valuable now than during the cold war. A nuclear-armed Iran, for example, would have far fewer weapons than the Soviet Union did, and, given advances in our missile accuracy and in our missile-defense capabilities, some believe we could escape a nuclear exchange unscathed. But that is a fantasy built on a risk we would never be willing to take. Most Iranian missiles are mobile, mounted on large trucks, and therefore difficult to eliminate in a preemptive strike. Our ballistic-missile defenses, meanwhile, are far from perfect, and even a perfect system could not stop airplanes or cruise missiles or nuclear suicide bombers in a boat or a truck—all ways in which a nuclear Iran could respond to an attack. What's more, although Washington's relations with Moscow and Beijing are hardly tense enough for either to fear a bolt from the blue, the Taiwan Strait remains one of the world's most dangerous flash points, and perceived attempts to maintain a nuclear "advantage" will only undercut the cooperation we need from both to deal with challenges like Iran.

By contrast, nuclear restraint could prove useful. Even though our nuclear posture can play little role in deterring terrorism, a less aggressive posture can play a role in preventing it. The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) requires most states to forsake nuclear weapons, but, in exchange for their tolerance of the two-tiered system this creates, they get several benefits: They have the reassurance of knowing that rival states will remain nuclear-free, they are guaranteed access to nuclear technology for peaceful purposes—like energy production—and they were promised that the nuclear-weapons states would work toward disarmament. Admittedly, states like North Korea and Iran are not basing their nuclear decisions on U.S. compliance or lack thereof with the NPT, but other states, whose cooperation we need to pressure violators and create a more secure nuclear world, do. For example, Mohamed ElBaradei has said that the Senate's 1999 rejection of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty was "a devastating blow to our efforts to gain acceptance of more intrusive inspections of nuclear facilities around the world." Our own nuclear posture, therefore, can retard the spread of nuclear weapons. And, to the extent that we discourage proliferation, we reduce the opportunities both for catastrophe and for aspiring nuclear terrorists to acquire the tools they need.

That is one reason why the new START agreement is crucial, as are efforts like the test-ban treaty. Particularly given our overwhelming conventional might, the less salient nuclear weapons become in international affairs, the more secure the United States becomes. The president's stated goal of abolition is the logical end of this chain of reasoning. And—ironically, since conservatives deride it as naïve—it is the only true escape from deterrence. Abolition may or may not be feasible in our lifetimes, but, for the time being, it doesn't matter. In stark contrast with counterforce, the steps taken toward disarmament do not undermine the nature of deterrence itself. Deterrence can remain stable with fewer nuclear weapons, without new nuclear weapons, and without nuclear testing. The vulnerability of deterrence may be unpleasant, but the only way to escape it will be to move through the nuclear age. We certainly cannot go around it.

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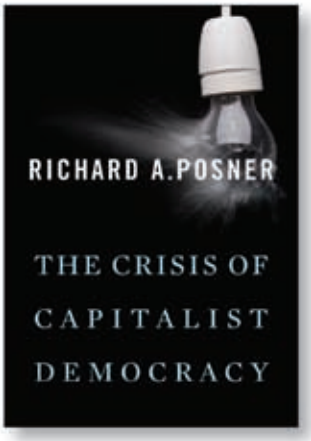

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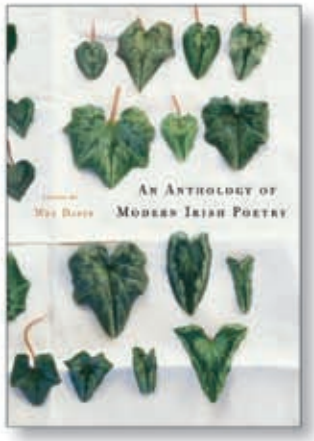

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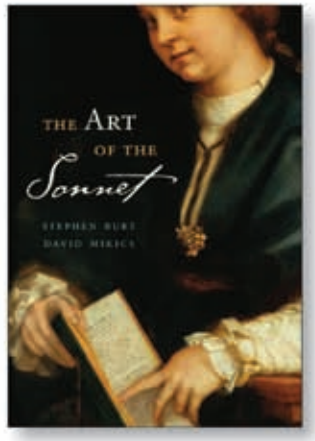

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Stanley Kauffmann on Films

SECRETS

A candle is lighted in the dark. This is the opening shot of *The Eclipse*, hinting at mystery. The next shot reveals that the candle is a taper on a table in a large hotel restaurant. Thus in its first few seconds the film suggests that it will inhabit two spheres, the mysterious and the diurnal, and that the two will virtually overlap.

This Irish film was adapted by the playwright Conor McPherson, who has directed several films, and by Billy Roche from Roche's original story. As they surely knew from the start, they took on a difficult job. The story probes the possibilities of the supernatural, yet it is couched in the doings of the day. The makers' task was to render the ghostly aspects credible without making a conventional ghost film—to embed those aspects in proximate life. Otherwise, the eerie matters would be trite without credible prosy context, and the context might possibly be a bit overly familiar without the ghostly touches.

The place is Cobh on the southern Irish coast, and the occasion in the hotel is part of the annual Cobh Literary Festival. We are there with Michael Farr, a local resident who is a volunteer assistant for the festival, a fortyish man who is a teacher but once dallied with writing and likes being around writers. Home we go with Michael after lunch to his two children and no mother. Michael's wife died two years earlier, and her absence, as photos on the wall convey, is a continuing loss.

That night Michael has the first experience that suggests the presence of a ghost. The screenplay has made it clear, as has the actor Ciarán Hinds, that Michael is a mature and sensible man, and it is this truth that makes the occurrence all the more unsettling. It is almost as if Michael were thinking, "This sort of thing doesn't happen to people like me." No phantom figure is identified, but this apparition and subsequent ones seem to have some relation to Michael's father-in-law, who is invalided in a nursing home.

The experience is in a way emphasized by the arrival at the festival the next day of a novelist whom Michael is to tend. She is Lena Morelle (played with no trace of an accent by the Danish actress Iben Hjejle). Lena is a thirtyish woman, lissome and taking, whose most recent book, in shadowy coincidence, is about ghosts and is called *The Eclipse*. (When she titled her book, Lena apparently was not referring to Antonioni's 1962 film of that name.) Michael hears her read from her book to an audience. Later he confides in her about his spooky experience.

But, as if to keep the film poised between two spheres, the worldly world is kept at center by the arrival of an American novelist named Nicholas Holden—Aidan Quinn at his winningly insolent best—with whom Lena had an affair a year earlier. Nicholas is married (one almost adds "of course") and, even though his wife is arriving soon, wants to resume things with Lena during the festival. She manages to agree and disagree. The relationship between Nick and Lena contrasts with her meetings with Michael, which are always warm but never romantic. The possibly supernatural events that happen to him are the presence of his past. He is even now more of a married man than Nicholas.

Still, the relations between the two men implode eventually, around Lena. There is a bit at the finish, typical of the film's restraint, that hints at the way in which all matters will go, yet the ending doesn't attempt to explain the story's supernatural elements. The film-makers don't want to explain: they simply want to put possibilities before us to disturb us a little—almost like intrusions of the timeless into such a topical matter as a literary festival. The ghostly incidents can possibly be explained through the psyche, if such an explanation is needed by the viewer. For the most part, it is as if we had simply looked around the corner of what we believe in general and are surprised to learn that there was or is such a corner.

THE ECLIPSE
Magnolia Pictures

HANDSOME HARRY
Paladin

BLUEBEARD
Strand Releasing

Hinds, fairly familiar from some previous films and some Broadway appearances, is the main strength of the picture. He is one of those actors, like Humphrey Bogart and Walter Matthau, who are not at all handsome in the conventional way yet who are, oddly, more quickly credible because of it. Besides his looks, Hinds has intelligence, gravity, humor that is seasoned in travail. Hjejle never seems to be acting, a quality that is often—here certainly—desirable in an actor. On the other hand, Quinn is playing a man who is a performer, performing his life, and Quinn secures him down to his chromosomes.

The directing of this film seems to have been something of a tightrope act, trying to keep a balance between one basic element and the other, and McPherson succeeds thoroughly. Not a great deal of it is deeply moving (though the "spirit" moments are tense), but it is always compelling through its air of intelligent risk. A round of praise, too, for the cinematog-

ANTHONY RUSSO

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rapher Ivan McCullough, who makes colors vivid yet true and whose shots of the town make me regret that, though four times in Eire, I have never been in Cobh.

The American director Bette Gordon, who made her first feature (*Variety*) in 1983 and has since been chiefly active in television, has now made *Handsome Harry* from a screenplay by Nicholas T. Proferes, who has chiefly been a cinematographer. The result is a notable picture, one that possibly pleases its makers especially because it may have turned out even better than they hoped.

Harry Sweeney, in his fifties, runs an auto repair shop and is a figure in his town, the kind of man who jokes with his friends and the waitress when he goes to the local luncheonette for his morning coffee. His story here consists of visits to five people who figured in his past. This plot structure has existed since at least as early as Duvivier's *Un Carnet de Bal* in 1937, with Marie Bell as the revisitor, and was used again as recently as Jarmusch's *Broken Flowers* in 2005, with Bill Murray in a comparable role. Jamey Sheridan, more familiar from television than film, is at least the equal of his predecessors in revisiting. Slim, grizzled, quietly convoluted, Sheridan makes us eager through his reality to know what Harry's expeditions will disclose.

Just as his married son arrives for a visit, Harry, a divorcé, gets a frantic call from a former Navy shipmate of thirty years ago. Tom Kelley is on his deathbed and pleads to see Harry before he goes. Harry excuses himself to his son because, he says, Kelley was his best friend during his Navy days. Subsequently we learn that this is not quite true: still, Harry wants to go.

The dying Kelley has on his conscience a drunken brawl thirty years past in which he and Harry were involved and in which another shipmate was injured. He asks Harry to look up that injured man and the others who were involved and try to find out exactly what happened. Harry ultimately agrees—we sense that there is more to this story than the brawl—and sets out to visit their shipmates. The last man in fact does the visiting himself.

Through swift flashes of the past that recur during the odyssey, we soon see that homosexuality is involved in this past episode, with the young Harry's full participation. In the course of the film we see present-day Harry in bed with a woman, but we also see his affectionate re-meeting with his partner of thirty years ago. At the last, Harry is able to acknowledge the past episode as part of the fullness of his self.

Steve Buscemi, Campbell Scott, Titus Welliver, John Savage, and (again!) Aidan Quinn play the former shipmates, all of them buttressing Sheridan's central role with verities of their own. Intriguingly, the shape of the picture heightens its interest. If there is such a genre as the revisit picture and if the writing and acting are as good as they are here, this human spelunking is bound to fascinate.

Inevitably, the makers of the film have given us a concise sketch of the changes in American attitudes toward homosexuality during those thirty years. (As a further index of changes in such frankness during that era, compare Tennessee Williams's earlier plays with his later ones.) The secret of youthful indiscretion that Harry has locked within himself becomes part of his self-recognized being. The conclusion doesn't imply that his future life will be different from what it has lately been, but at least the idea of guilt has changed. Proferes has worked out his screenplay with considerable dexterity, and Gordon has directed with agreeable competence and, clearly, with closeness to her actors. *Handsome Harry* lives up to its title.

The new Catherine Breillat film is curious. This French writer-director has justly earned a reputation for uninhibited treatment of forceful sex, sometimes quite complicated, as in *The Last Mistress* and *Anatomy of Hell*. Now she has lighted on a famous fairy tale from Charles Perrault's collection—"Bluebeard," about a wealthy lord who murdered several wives. We are used to particularized versions of the tale, most notably Chaplin's celebrated *Monsieur Verdoux* and Chabrol's insufficiently celebrated *Landru*. Breillat, instead of intensifying the grue, as we might have expected, has calmed it. She has lavished loveliness on her picture visually, but she has left a bit limp the very elements that we might have thought would heat her.

She divides her screenplay between two pairs of young sisters, two in the 1950s and two in the Fairyland past. The more recent pair relish the original story, and as the younger one reads it to her sister, the fantasy pair intermittently act it out, sort of. Many scenes are beautifully shot by Vilko Filac and exquisitely costumed by Rose-Marie Melka, but the tensile interplay that Breillat presumably intended between the two time strands doesn't quite register. Partly this is because Breillat treats the fantasy line—the wife-murdering line—like a school pageant instead of a drama. The ending, though we have seen some drastic data, leaves us hungry for emotional conviction.

"It's not the story of the tale that is important here but its relationship with us as children," Breillat has said. "Why? Bluebeard is The Man Who Kills Women." Little of such terror is conveyed in this picturesque parade. Somewhere still in Breillat, we can sense from her past, is the *Bluebeard* that she didn't make. ◆

Helen Vendler

BETWEEN THE POTENCY AND THE EXISTENCE

THE LETTERS OF T. S. ELIOT: VOLUME 1 (1898–1922)
Edited by Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton
(Faber and Faber, 871 pp., £35)

THE LETTERS OF T. S. ELIOT: VOLUME 2 (1923–25)
Edited by Valerie Eliot and Hugh Haughton
(Faber and Faber, 878 pp., £35)

In these two volumes we find more than 1,600 pages of letters and T. S. Eliot is not yet forty. The heroic task of getting Eliot's writings properly assembled, edited, and annotated has begun in earnest: Christopher Ricks is doing the poems, Ronald Schuchard the prose, and Hugh Haughton has taken on the editing of the letters, begun by Valerie Eliot with the publication of a first volume in 1988 (now reissued in revised form and with "some 200 new letters"). The letters, expertly and fully annotated by Haughton, tell a peculiar, driven, and somewhat ghastly tale, including (in the first volume) Eliot's unsuccessful school days and his "loafing" through his first two years at Harvard; his increasing academic success, followed by a year in Paris and London; his progress toward a Harvard doctorate in philosophy, and his study of philosophy for a year at Oxford, with the expectation that he would (after defending his

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dissertation) join the philosophy department at Harvard; his repudiation of that academic future by staying in England, marrying Vivienne Haigh-Wood in 1915, and (encouraged by Ezra Pound, whom he had met in England) deciding that he would become a writer, while somehow making a living (teaching, which he disliked, gave way to employment at Lloyds Bank). *Prufrock and Other Observations*, published in 1917, was followed in 1922—after Eliot's nervous collapse and treatment in Switzerland—by the English and American publication of *The Waste Land*, the work that in its cosmopolitan scope and haunting free verse changed the face of modern poetry.

Now, in Volume Two, we can see Eliot founding his literary review *The Criterion*, and suffering, while also in part causing, the excruciating breakdown of his marriage (a terrible tale to be continued in future volumes). At the same time Eliot becomes, by his constant production of arresting prose (*Homage to John Dryden*, *The Sacred Wood*), the most impressive literary critic in England. His professional and social doings are tracked by the letters almost day by day, but his marital life—experienced under intolerable pressure—bursts through only sporadically and incoherently in the relatively few intimate letters here. And intertwined with these narratives—the publication of poetry and prose, the management of *The Criterion*, the marriage, the social engagements with the Bloomsbury set and their wealthy friends—is the more intermittent narrative of Eliot's relation with his family, especially with his mother Charlotte and his brother Henry, the two family members closest in sensibility to the poet. The most occluded narrative, perhaps naturally, is that of the genesis of the poems. It is frustrating to see Eliot writing to his mother in 1920, about *The Waste Land*, that "I want a period of tranquility to do a poem I have in mind"—and nothing more. These letters are not the place to search for the psychological origins of the poetry. To guess at those internal sources one needs to go to the early poems (edited by Christopher Ricks in 1996 under Eliot's title *Inventions of the March Hare*) and to the facsimile edition of *The Waste Land* (edited by Valerie Eliot in 1971).

When we stand back from the main narratives visible through the letters, we can view the entire improbability of Eliot's life and art. His taking literary London by storm was hardly conceivable, given his beginnings. He was an introverted and high-strung young American from St. Louis, shy, virginal, and inexperienced in business; he had no independent income of a reliable sort; he had no ready-made London literary network; he worked from nine to five in a taxing bank position, dealing with international financial relations; he had no gift for addressing the general public. He did have Pound urging him on, but Pound soon fled London for Italy. What Eliot did possess—or was possessed by—was a nature driven not only toward the composition of poetry, but also toward an evangelism that would release modern poetry from convention without detaching it from tradition.

Some have seen his evangelism as a will to power, exerted from the bastion of *The Criterion*; but Eliot primarily wanted the journal so that he could have a public role in the altering of taste. (He turned down the opportunity to be second-in-command to another editor.) Since he had no money, Eliot was always looking for patronage of a sort. *The Criterion* was financed by a rich society woman, Lilian Rothermere, who had heard of Eliot from his Harvard friend Scofield Thayer, the wealthy founder of the American literary magazine *The Dial* and the person through whom Eliot met Vivienne. Not only did Eliot not have money, he also could not entertain those members of society whom he wished to cultivate as backers: his wife was perpetually ill, and they lived in a succession of small flats. He depended, as conduits toward upper-class society, on Leonard and Virginia Woolf, who published his first poems and his first book of criticism, and on friends of theirs such as Ottoline Morrell, whose weekends at Garsington brought together the affluent and the gifted.

It is nothing short of amazing that Eliot, while composing poetry and working full time, founded, edited, and perpetuated *The Criterion* (which was replaced by *The New Criterion* in 1925, after Eliot became a director of the firm of Faber and Gwyer, later Faber and Faber). It is hard to think of any other American poetic genius carrying off such a feat of organization, entreaty, direction, writing, coordination, and fund-raising. Not for nothing had Eliot grown up as the son of a businessman. Although his father died still thinking his son a failure, Eliot's tenacious work on *The Criterion* suggests a will in the poet to prove himself competent in his father's world of money and business.

The *Criterion* correspondence, it must be said, is the most tedious part of the second volume of the *Letters*. In his search for contributors, Eliot "fawns [on] and flatters" (Virginia Woolf's words, uttered in annoyance) author after author, in England and abroad, inviting them—in English, in fluent French, even in basic German—to submit work to his new journal, pleading with one writer to introduce him to another, finding channels through which to meet foreigners, imploring Hermann Hesse for a meeting, becoming depressed when he receives no answer from Proust (both Hesse and Proust eventually contributed), setting up exchanges with foreign literary journals, manipulating reviewers, offering payments, mediating quarrels, assembling number after number (always at the last minute), writing for the journal even as he edited it evenings in his flat, corresponding with the printer, reporting on his work to Pound and others.

Nobody—unless engaged in a history of *The Criterion*—would willingly read all this correspondence in substantive detail. And reading it as an index of work hours is painful: all those hours taken from poetry. But the bank did not pay enough to live on and support a wife in any bourgeois fashion; and Eliot believed that the only way, in the long run, to gain a living wage as a writer was to find prestige through a journal. He actually thought of establishing a second journal (even while the first was exhausting him) which would be given a title such as *Symposium* or *Cahiers*, and would collect pieces by a number of authors on a common topic, but this idea never came to fruition. Although Eliot had distinct literary and political opinions, he did not wish the journal to be composed solely of essays, as many postwar journals tended to be: he wanted to print work by poets and novelists as well. Yet although the creative authors he printed by no means espoused a single point of view, over time the essays and commentaries in *The Criterion* took on a cast reflecting Eliot's own political and religious sentiments.

In the meantime, the literary avant-garde in the United States was not always pleased with Eliot, who had deserted America for Europe. John Crowe Ransom, from a legislative height, declared *The Waste Land* "one of the most insubordinate poems in the language." It probably gave Eliot a certain pleasure to reject the poems of Allen Tate and R. P. Blackmur, writing dryly to the latter in 1925:

> I think that your verse tends to diffuseness and to use of words of too general a meaning. Your poppy is not a definite

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> poppy seen in a particular place or associated with particular circumstances and emotions. I think that you need to work the precise image. "Laughter like hot ashes in the throat" is not a very good comparison because one does not know what hot ashes in the throat are like and they do not suggest any kind of laughter.

Eliot usually ended such a rejection letter with a mollifying remark, as he does here: "Later, I should very much like to see more of your work." There were endless such letters to be written, a task requiring severity, delicacy, and prudence alike.

If the *Criterion* narrative tends toward the tedious, the marital narrative spirals into the harrowing. Never had any two people (as Vivienne herself says in a letter) "made *such* a fearful mess of their obvious possibilities." The story begins as Eliot, at twenty-six, meets Vivienne at Oxford. They marry in a registry office three months later, without notifying either set of parents. In his seventies, Eliot wrote in a private memo:

> To explain my sudden marriage to Vivienne Haigh-Wood would require a good many words, and yet the explanation would probably remain unintelligible.... I think that all I wanted of Vivienne was a flirtation or a mild affair: I was too shy and unpractised to achieve either with anybody.... To her the marriage brought no happiness ... to me, it brought the state of mind out of which came *The Waste Land*.

The marriage was to prove the single most instructive event of Eliot's emotional life. Before he married, his closest tie had been to his high-minded mother, to whom he wrote passionately devoted letters until her death. The youngest of seven children, born when his mother was forty-five, and growing up in a family of settled habits and emotional taciturnity, he fled from the Eliot constriction to the gaiety that he found dancing with Vivienne. Had her health, both physical and mental, held out, the marriage might have been somewhat less disastrous; but Eliot would perhaps have neglected any wife, given the intense demands of his will to write. As it was, however, the Eliots' marriage ran into very bad luck. The letters reveal scarcely a day of their domestic doings which does not contain an account of illness.

For Vivienne alone, the physicians' diagnoses (as mediated in the letters) range from neuritis to neuralgia, from catarrh to "stomach" to migraine, from colitis (with "explosions") to influenza, both "septic" and "gastric," from eye problems to dental problems, from rheumatism to bronchitis to pneumonia to sinus to insomnia, from anemia to "defective circulation" to "paralysis of the intestines," to a "hard liver," "an extraordinary excess of *streptococcus fecalis*," and other increasingly improbable verdicts. One doctor, according to Eliot, "immediately diagnosed her whole trouble as *glands*." He outlined "a perfectly new and violent cure.... She is to have the glands of animals, but of course this at present is purely experimental, and it may take a long time before they find the right glands."

T. S. Eliot with his mother, London, 1921

One wants to weep at the Eliots' medical history: Vivienne reports of the doctor that "he gave me some glands to take called Ovarian Opocaps and told me that this was a 'shot in the dark.'" Vivienne's father became ill, and when she became ill herself, Eliot speculated in desperation that "the standing so much by her father's bed precipitated internal displacements." The conjoined ignorance of the doctors and the Eliots led to treatments not only of dubious benefit but also of positive harm: regimes of starvation, peculiar massages, enemas, "manipulation," and "serum and Bulgarian bacillus." On one occasion Vivienne is reported to be in "screaming agony"; on another, she gets up and immediately falls down. She takes to her bed for weeks. Eliot's acquaintances (except for Bertrand Russell, who had an affair with her) disliked Vivienne. Virginia Woolf notes, among her visitors in 1924, "Mrs. Eliot—this last making me almost vomit, so scented, so powdered, so egotistic, so morbid, so weakly." Katherine Mansfield calls Vivienne "this teashop creature."

Years passed without the American Eliots meeting Vivienne. Finally, a visit of two months from Eliot's "terrifyingly energetic" mother, his sister Marion, and his brother Henry was arranged. When his mother left (causing some sort of "fit" of Vivienne's at the departure), he was desolate. Vivienne cried out in a letter to Henry against the Eliot chill: "I was extremely anxious to show no emotion before your family at any time, and then I ended in a fit! I found the emotionless condition a great strain, all the time. I used to think I should burst out and scream and dance." Eliot's own total breakdown followed a month later. Charlotte Eliot's chilling judgment on her son's predicament was that "it was not an eugenic marriage." When she visits again in 1924, Eliot writes to Woolf that "I have been boiled in a hellbroth."

Yet that same marriage, as I have said, was for Eliot the most revealing experience in his emotional and sexual life. It plunged him into an insoluble physical and intellectual abyss, where he could neither withdraw nor advance. It taught him what philosophy had failed to teach him: the irreducible grimness of the invalid body, his own as well as Vivienne's, and the loathing that could grow between incompatible souls. The situation exceeded the powers of rationality, and the powers of sympathy. His family's Emersonian "transcendental atheism" did not give the poet a religion he could find consoling. He was unwillingly brought to acknowledge his own helplessness as he lost the struggle against nervous collapse; and in the single most revealing sentence in these letters, he describes to John Quinn, his New York friend and patron, a feeling of pervasive horror that never left him: "Whenever I get very tired or worried I recognise all the old symptoms ready to appear, with half a chance, and find myself under the continuous strain of trying

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to suppress a vague but intensely acute horror and apprehension."

Although Eliot had a rational interest in religion that arose from his family roots in New England and his Harvard studies of both Christianity and Buddhism, he found himself addressing religion under duress from the despair of the marriage, and from his guilt for his part in its failure. His mother, after reading *The Waste Land* with considerable discomfort, wrote that "I would like him to supplement *The Waste Land* by its natural sequence [for "sequel"?] 'The coming of the Grail.'" Charlotte Eliot herself wrote a dreary Browningesque verse drama on Savonarola, showing the preacher's mother heartening her idealistic son. When he failed to place it with Knopf, Eliot paid to have it published by the printer for *The Criterion*, and wrote a foreword (in which his relation to the author went unmentioned) speculating that a new sort of verse drama would be the next modern literary feature. Years later, in writing *Four Quartets*, Eliot was at last fulfilling his mother's desire that he should write of finding the Grail. And his (erroneous) prophecy of the importance of verse drama to the future of literature led to his own plays in verse, received respectfully but rarely resuscitated for the stage.

And what was occurring in the poetry during the period covered by these two volumes? Most of Eliot's best work: "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," *The Waste Land*, "The Hollow Men," "Gerontion," and *Poems 1909–1925*. The self-portraits in these works are full of contempt, as Eliot the satirist of pinched New England turns his eyes obliquely—in second or third person—upon himself, revealing "The thousand sordid images / Of which your soul was constituted." These images are externalized in desolate environments, landscapes, and buildings, and spoken with the air of dread and paranoia seen in the speaker of "Gerontion":

> My house is a decayed house,
> And the jew squats on the window sill,
> the owner,
> Spawned in some estaminet of
> Antwerp,
> Blistered in Brussels, patched and
> peeled in London.
> The goat coughs at night in the field
> overhead,
> Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.

The casual St. Louis anti-Semitism of Eliot's mother ("I have an instinctive antipathy to Jews, just as I have to certain animals") takes on, in the hysterical anxiety of those lines in "Gerontion," the sinister tones of European anti-Semitism, in which Jews are the financial controllers of the world, squatting on hoards in Antwerp, Brussels, London. Stepping through Eliot's repellent landscape one finds the occasional moss and flower, yes, but one encounters, too, rocks and iron and excrement under foot (and even the flower is called "stonecrop").

And stepping into an equally repellent social scene, one finds Eliot's disgusted portraits of the social world, "high" and "low" alike: Princess Volupine and Sir Frederick Klein, Sweeney and Doris, are exposed in knife-sharp, at-arm's-length quatrains. Life is—and the poet too is (as he says in a poem in French)—a "Mélange Adultère de Tout":

> En Amérique, professeur;
> En Angleterre, journaliste;
> C'est à grands pas et en sueur
> Que vous suivrez à peine ma piste.
> En Yorkshire, conférencier;
> A Londres, un peu banquier.

In America, he is a professor; in England, a journalist; in Yorkshire, a lecturer; in London, a banker; it will take many leaps and a quantity of sweat to follow his trail.

Self-definition by trade or profession is expressed with such sarcasm by Eliot because there exists no worldly tradename for a poet. The poet—or at least this poet—is a hollow man, having neither a commercial profession nor a religious vocation, balked of both. Once *The Waste Land* had been completed, and the broken self was evacuated, Eliot writes his own (collective) epitaph:

> We are the hollow men
> We are the stuffed men
> Leaning together
> Headpiece filled with straw, Alas!
> Our dried voices, when
> We whisper together
> Are quiet and meaningless
> As wind in dry grass
> Or rats' feet over broken glass
> In our dry cellar

Paralyzed, the hollow men cannot actualize any potential, sexual or creative; their every effort is blocked, their very lines falter:

> Between the desire
> And the spasm
> Between the potency
> And the existence
> Between the essence
> And the descent
> Falls the Shadow.

The voice falls silent after a futile attempt to finish the Lord's Prayer, breaking up in static as it utters its final whimper:

> For thine is
> Life is
> For Thine is the

Beneath Eliot's letters in the second volume—so preoccupied with journalism on the left and marital horror on the right—one hears the hollow men's meaningless whispers. Eliot is heading toward religion, but is unable as yet to carry a religious utterance through to finality. In a letter in 1925 to Herbert Read, Eliot sets out the dangers of pursuing a religious identity:

> Of course the religious difficulty is the great one and it is impossible to tell what one's solution will be.... One must be on guard against the prejudices of one's training on the one hand and any emotional collapse on the other. I certainly do not want to fall into the pit of obscurantism. But one way or the other it will need an heroic effect [for "effort"?] to keep from allowing oneself illicit conclusions.

The poet's eventual decision—to convert to Anglicanism and to take a vow of celibacy—is not yet in view. In the implicit war for Eliot's affections, his mother in the end prevails.

Of all Eliot's correspondents, his brother Henry (hitherto a vague figure in the public mind) comes off the best. Henry is the mediator between Eliot and his mother, carefully explaining the nature of "Tom's" poems to her, putting them in their best light. He is a genius of tact, writing to his difficult brother with warmth and generosity. He even leaves his own typewriter behind after his visit to England, having silently noticed the broken-down machine on which his brother is depending. Henry has extraordinary self-knowledge and is an eloquent writer; his understanding of the Eliot family's character—the reticence, the avoidance of all subjects concerning the body, the Puritanical rectitude—is helpful to his brother. In England, on their mother's second visit, he provided a buffer between Vivienne and Charlotte. A thoroughly kind person, Henry advised his mother on her financial decisions and her will, all the while funneling money of his own to the

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impoverished Tom and Vivienne. They were, of course, not impoverished in an elemental sense: they kept a servant, they had a flat, Tom had a job. But they did not have middle-class comforts, or any financial cushion; Henry was a reassuring presence in their distress.

One of the rewards of reading the best of these letters is Eliot's impeccable prose. His sentences—so precise, so well-turned, so quietly efficient in business letters—convey his violence of temperament in the tortured letters of April 1925 to John Middleton Murry. Any reviewer would feel obliged to mention these moments at which Eliot tears off his mask and his disguises, and almost singes the paper as he describes the ten years of his marriage:

> In the last ten years—gradually but deliberately—I have made myself into a machine. I have done it deliberately—in order to endure, in order not to feel—but it has killed V.... Is it best to make oneself a machine, and kill them by not giving nourishment, or to be alive, and kill them by wanting something that one cannot get from that person? ... Must I kill her or kill myself? I have tried to kill myself—but only to make the machine which kills her.... I feel now that one cannot help another by ruining one's own soul—I have done that.

We have not yet arrived in these volumes at the moment when Vivienne's brother (with the implicit consent of Eliot) commits her to a mental "nursing home," in which she will remain until her death in 1947. But already in these early volumes she has exhibited symptoms of madness (in which the many drugs that she was taking surely played a part). Convinced that she is losing her mind, she stays in bed and becomes more and more deranged. Eliot reports to her brother:

> She became more and more frantic as time went on and took to making the most shocking faces and hypnotising herself. I can say no more of this; it is too horrible. I leave it to your imagination.

The doctors' verdict, at this stage of Vivienne's disintegration, is for residential treatment. Vivienne writes her husband a piteous letter from the nursing home:

> I am sorry I tortured you and drove you mad. I had no notion until yesterday afternoon that I had done it. I have been simply raving mad.... Please write to this doctor instantly and tell him the truth, that we have had sexual relations. Do these things for me. Especially about our married life and make him see it had been good. All here believe not.

And this is how these volumes end. Eliot has left Vivienne and gone abroad, first to recover at the Hotel Savoie in La Turbie in southwest France, near the Viscountess Rothermere, and later to see Pound in Rapallo. The doctor reports that Vivienne's hysteria is less frequent and that "considering that her will to take drugs is being systematically opposed, she is a good case." But Vivienne is threatening suicide, and she is subsequently sent to a different nursing home run by Seventh-Day Adventists, where she needs a private nurse to see her through her insomniac nights. And when Eliot returns to London, the relentless machine of the *Criterion* correspondence grinds on. (In one letter, Eliot writes to F. Scott Fitzgerald, telling him that *The Great Gatsby* "has interested and excited me more than any new novel I have seen, either English or American, for a number of years.")

Eliot is thirty-seven as the second of these volumes comes to a close in 1925. He lived until 1965, so there are many more volumes to come. Eventually, in 2019, the thousand restricted letters at Princeton written by Eliot to Emily Hale—the woman he loved, or thought he loved, in his youth—will be opened to scholars. Those letters will revise yet again our idea of the Eliot of these volumes. As for her letters to him, he burned them. ◆

John Banville
THE IDOLATRY OF LIGHT

TIEPOLO PINK
By Roberto Calasso
Translated by Alastair McEwen
(Knopf, 288 pp., $40)

Giambattista Tiepolo was not the last of the old masters—that dubious distinction is usually conferred on Goya—but it is surely safe to say that he was the last great painter of the Italian Renaissance. In Roberto Calasso's elegant formulation, Tiepolo was "the right person to impersonate painting's epilogue, just as in a theater performance there is an actor whose function is solely to appear at the end and make an imperfectible bow to the audience." Although Tiepolo was born on the cusp of the seventeenth century, his work strongly echoes that of earlier painters, especially Veronese, who died more than a century before Tiepolo's birth but whose themes, subjects, and even turns of style Tiepolo freely borrowed from. Calasso quotes a contemporary's estimation of Tiepolo as "a happy painter by nature," and Calasso himself goes so far as to describe him as "the last breath of happiness in Europe." It is all more complicated than that, of course; and it is the complexities here, as so often elsewhere, that Calasso finds most stimulating.

Very little is known of Tiepolo the man. His family bore an anciently aristocratic name, but this was either a happy coincidence or a deliberate borrowing. As Michael Levey says in his fine and detailed monograph on the painter, which first appeared in 1986, Tiepolo does not seem to have claimed kinship with the noble Venetian family, "but it is likely that somehow a member of it had adopted an ancestor of the painter's and permitted, or encouraged, use of the name." We do know that he was born on April 16, 1696, to Domenico and Orsetta Tiepolo, the youngest of their six children. On the baptismal entry the painter's father is listed merely as "merchant," but in the Venice of the day that could have meant anything from a lowly dealer in olive oil to a mighty magnate with a flotilla of ships at his command. Certainly Domenico had contacts among the leading Venetian families, for instance the Dolfin, who were to commission some of the painter's early works.

Was Tiepolo secretive, an artistic cabbalist who hid his doings from the world, or was he just careless of history's hunger for biographical facts? Certainly, as Calasso writes, "his life was as transparent as glass: no one noticed it." His few personal appearances in his work are tinged with sly humor, as in the surely intentional comedy of *Apelles Painting Campaspe*, where everyone, not least the

John Banville is the author, most recently, of The Infinities *(Knopf).*

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painter, seems amazed at what is going on, or in *Rachel Hiding the Idols from Her Father Laban*, from which a decidedly unflattering self-portrait looks out at us with an ironical cast, as if, Levey writes, "inviting a smile at the extravagant spectacle of which he is the deviser." (And at the painter's feet, delightfully, sits a little girl who is a dead ringer for Maggie Simpson.)

He was recognized from early on as supremely gifted, "with an imagination daring and ardent," as Levey nicely has it, and around 1710 he entered the Venetian studio of Gregorio Lazzarini to be trained as a painter. Apart from the all-pervading influence of Veronese, Tiepolo also absorbed the lessons of past masters such as Rembrandt and Salvator Rosa, and the example of his older contemporary Giambattista Piazzetta. Tiepolo and Piazzetta differed in many respects—Levey describes them as the Picasso and Matisse of their time—but the effect of the older painter's work on that of the younger is plain. Levey writes:

> What Tiepolo was responding to was the forceful yet not coarse or exaggerated realism that Piazzetta conveyed, as much in his accomplished, admired drawings . . . as in his paintings. Physical actuality, summed up in the body, was grasped with an originality that embraced idiosyncratic types of physiognomy, consciously ordinary, even plebeian, but exuding a challenging, pungent air of being "true."

Roberto Calasso acknowledges the "physical actuality" of Tiepolo's work, but what he chooses to emphasize is precisely the painter's lack of emphasis. For Calasso, what marks Tiepolo off from the other great Italian painters, even Veronese, is the way in which he gives himself up to that phenomenon which, Calasso suggests, is the "ultimate peculiarity of Italian culture, the quality it could be proudest of," that is, *sprezzatura*. This slippery word—hardly translatable, so deeply is it woven into the language and life of Italy—is defined by Castiglione, so Calasso tells us, as the avoidance of affectation by "using in all things a certain nonchalance [*sprezzatura*] that may conceal art and demonstrate that what one does and says is done without effort and almost without thinking." The perils of characterizing an artist's work in this way are obvious—nonchalance can seem mere whimsy, and betray a fatal dandyism—and much of Calasso's book is devoted to demonstrating that it is precisely in the lightness

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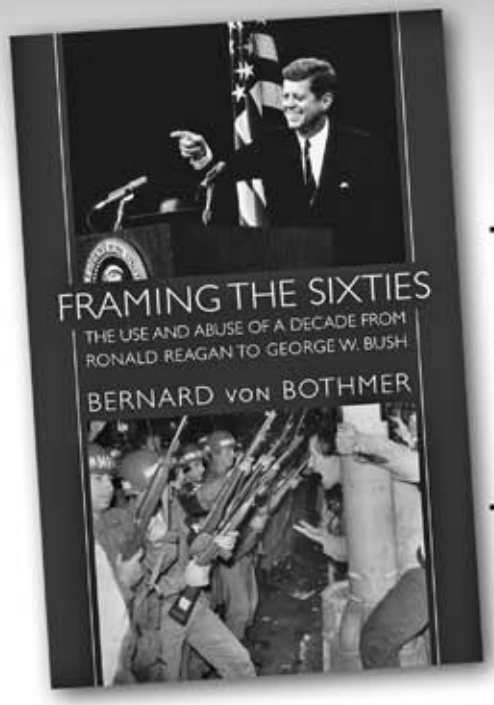

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of his touch that Tiepolo achieves his weightiest effects.

A hundred years ago, the painter John Butler Yeats, writing from self-imposed exile in New York, gave a wise piece of advice to his son William: an artist, the old man cautioned, must have a great facility—*and never use it.* Tiepolo's facility, particularly as a fresco artist, was legendary: has there ever been a painter who solved with such elegance and such seeming ease the problem of situating figures in space? This extraordinary talent has led a number of commentators, who should have known better, to dismiss him as a mere provider of overblown triumphs and trumperies to the wealthy aristocrats who hired him to adorn their grand dwellings and puff up their already high regard for themselves.

It is true that Tiepolo worked hard, at extraordinary speed, to satisfy the desires of his patrons, from Dionisio Dolfin, for whom he painted some of his earliest works at the patriarchal palace at Udine, through Karl Philipp von Greiffenklau, Prince-Bishop of Würzburg, the ceilings of whose Neue Residenz he decorated with what are considered his greatest frescoes, to Charles III of Spain, who summoned him to paint the throne room of the Royal Palace of Madrid, the city where Tiepolo died in 1770. All this hectic busyness struck suspicion into many a stout heart of the late-Romantic age. "There were years," Calasso remarks, "in which English-speaking travelers visited Venice and did not see Tiepolo." Ruskin disdained his work, and Henry James tells us of writing in "one of the faded back rooms" of the Palazzo Barbaro in Venice under a "pompous Tiepolo ceiling."

On the other hand, and somewhat surprisingly, Mark Twain in 1878 wrote in his diary: "But Tiepolo is *my* artist," and James's friend Edith Wharton, Calasso tellingly observes, "admired Tiepolo without moral reservations, with upper-class confidence." We might have expected Proust to revel in the work of this great Venetian, but in all of *In Search of Lost Time*, Calasso assures us—trust him to know a thing like this—there is no mention of any Tiepolo painting, though the name occurs three times, each time in the context of a shade of red. "Perhaps," Calasso writes, "the most congenial and equable end for an artist is that of being transformed into a color, like Daphne into laurel: this is what happened to Tiepolo in Proust," who on various occasions dresses the three most significant women in his work—Odette, the Duchesse de Guermantes, and Albertine—in "Tiepolo pink."

Calasso's remark about Edith Wharton's "upper-class confidence" is a sort of limbering-up preparatory to his defensive assault on the great Italian critic Roberto Longhi, who "made Tiepolo the Bad Guy to set in opposition to the Good Guy par excellence, who was unfailingly Caravaggio." Longhi, unusually for such a patrician and finical discriminator, wrote a rancorous fictional dialogue between Caravaggio and Tiepolo supposed to take place in heaven—"a whimsy without precedent or further development in Longhi's work"—in which Caravaggio berates his younger colleague for not being sufficiently dedicated to "truth." Calasso describes Longhi's "rant" against Tiepolo as "not entirely unlike an altercation between neighbors in a condo, albeit one conducted in a high-flown style," a description which could be applied equally well to Calasso's own shouting match with his late fellow critic.

Ruskin, in his dismissal of Tiepolo, spoke of him as "virtually the beginner of Modernism" and went on to compare paintings of his to "what a first-rate Parisian Academy student would do … after having read unlimited quantities of George Sand and Dumas." It is profoundly ironic, Calasso observes, that

> the word *modernism*, which throughout the twentieth century would become the emblem of all avant-garde movements, is here applied to the most hackneyed academic painting, which in its turn could allegedly be traced back to Tiepolo. Yet now that the clamor of the avant-garde has passed, saying that Tiepolo had something to do with modernism makes sense once more.

Calasso in his book has two broad aims. The first is to convince us of Tiepolo's position as the last great practitioner of European painting, "at least in the particular, singular, irretrievable sense it had acquired over roughly five centuries in Europe, where countless painters had all conformed to a single notion of painting and moved as a unified whole of immaculate grace and lightness, like certain extremely fat actors such as Sydney Greenstreet." (Calasso has an endearing tendency to lurch into the vernacular.) The second, and related, aim is to defend Tiepolo against the "partisan poetics" of vaguely left-wing critics such as Longhi, whose dedication to "the ideology of *realismo all'italiana*" as represented by Caravaggio blinded him, Calasso believes, to Tiepolo's true worth.

Thus Calasso observes that "while it is doubtful that the cause of the proletariat was dear to his heart," Longhi out of political conviction insisted on the term *reality* as an arbiter of artistic success, "and always with the idea that modernism must be, by vocation, something grim and 'workaday' "—rather than, we assume, airy and easeful, and ever informed by the spirit of *sprezzatura*. Calasso sees himself agreeing with Longhi that Tiepolo was the last of a glorious line, but for Longhi Tiepolo was "the weak link … the reprobate whose aberrant style heralded the lamentable end of a superb history." While Longhi claimed Caravaggio as the first painter of the modern age, Calasso on the contrary insists that "in retrospect the only painter who could have had a claim to be the first of the forefathers of 'modern life' was none other than Tiepolo."

The spectacle of one scholar lambasting another is always fun for the rest of us, but the intricate argument that Calasso engages in here is an important one. It broaches nothing less than the sources and the purposes of art itself. Tiepolo's *realismo* is of a separate order—"Tiepolo's characters form a parallel world, with its own customs and conventions"—and his truth is not the truth of brute facts. Far more than the self-willed Caravaggio, Tiepolo is for Calasso a true leveler, leading his tribe of characters, "the prophetic tribe with blazing eyes" that Baudelaire speaks of in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, from Venice to Würzburg to Madrid and back again, "an unstoppable motley caravan that dragged along with them all their assorted trappings, the flotsam and jetsam of history." Calasso sees in this troupe of commedia dell'arte players—surprisingly, there is no mention of Watteau, another artist whose essence is evanescence—an invention "one might dream about to this day: a democracy leveled off toward the top, where aesthetic quality makes it possible to eliminate any divergence in status."

And then there is the sheer happiness that Tiepolo communicates—that happiness for which "he was not forgiven." It is a rapturous conjuring of delight out of light: Calasso quotes Giorgio Manganelli speaking of Tiepolo as "an idolater of light disguised as a human being," and himself defines him as "the saturnine painter of radiant light." Longhi, too, "when he was not blinded by acrimony," had a wonderful notion of Tiepolo as "a Veronese after a downpour," and indeed

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these depthless skyscapes have the thrilling instability of rain-light. In Tiepolo, it is always a rinsed and glistening April afternoon. And in that luminous, languorous *après-midi* it is Eros that rules: "Every fiber of his painting is erotic. Not only in the bodies and poses but in the *ductus*, which washes over his figures like a wave of light." No wonder the princes and the worldly churchmen loved him.

The central section of Calasso's book is a detailed study of thirty-three remarkable and mysterious etchings by Tiepolo, ten *Capricci* and twenty-three *Scherzi*, the dating of which is disputed, though it seems the *Capricci* were made in the 1740s and the *Scherzi* in the 1750s. "There is a sense," Michael Levey wrote, "in which the *Scherzi di Fantasia* could be claimed as the most perfect productions of all Tiepolo's art." These strange, obsessively repetitive works have puzzled most scholars and made many of them palpably uneasy, not only because of their enigmatic quality but also because of the dark matters in which they dabble: satyr families, mysterious Orientals, severed heads, baleful owls, and ubiquitous serpents, usually twined around staves, as with the caduceus of Hermes. The book's well-written blurb is a little misleading in promising us that, while few have attempted to tackle the mystery of these etchings, "Roberto Calasso rises to the challenge, interpreting them as chapters in a dark narrative that contains the secrets of Tiepolo's art." Tackle them he does, and with great verve; but when it comes to his actual interpretation of these obscure poetic images, there is a great deal of throat-clearing and shuffling of papers, as the scholar takes refuge behind his scholarship.

Certainly Calasso writes wonderfully about the series—for instance, when he describes how they are "marked by the convergence of a superabundance of light and a kind of internal corrosion of the objects," and how in them "Tiepolo wove the countermelody of the Enlightenment." But as to the essential riddle of these sphinxlike works, he is more modest than his blurb writer. It is unclear, he writes,

> why the airiest of painters, the one most accustomed to moving among skies and clouds, should have cultivated and developed—in the secret chamber of his mind—this chain of images of claustrophobia *en plein air*, charged with burning intensity. Images that all—even the scholars most faithful to Tiepolo, like Levey—seem to wish to flee from as fast as possible, murmuring a few words of cursory admiration. If the *Scherzi* are Tiepolo's secret, then it must also be admitted that it is a well-protected one.

As to scholarship, Calasso ranges from hermeneutic probings of the Book of Genesis through the Eleusinian Mysteries and the works of Hermes Trismegistus to the Rig-Veda and the sermons of Saint Ambrose. This writer is nothing if not well-read—a fact which he is eager to impress upon us and about which he is perhaps a little vain. His interrogation of these works is marvelously stimulating, but he, too, ends in vagueness and vague unease. A "suspicion begins slowly to creep in," he tells us "that the subject of the *Scherzi* is seeing—and observing oneself." The word "scherzo" in one of its meanings signifies a joke, and perhaps the "'joke' that the *Scherzi* conceal in their gravity would be this: they are images that look at themselves." That may be—but really, what does it signify?

In the end, however, it does not matter. Explorers cannot be blamed if sometimes their sites keep their secrets. And we do not go to a book such as this one in expectation of an Agatha Christie plot neatly unpicked. Calasso has written a brilliant, eccentric, provocative, annoying, and thoroughly splendid celebration of a great painter the essence of whose work, as with the work of all real artists, must remain enigmatic:

> Nowhere was he recognised for what he was, nor did anyone grasp the peculiarity of the spell cast by his hand. Just as he had arrived without meeting any resistance, so he departed without arousing any regret, losing himself among the names of those of whom there is a confused, shadowy memory. No one suspected that with him vanished the last point of equilibrium in the visible. Elusive, precarious, and bewitching. Yet such was the case. Thereafter, even the possibility that that point existed was forgotten. ◆

Benny Morris
THE PARTY LINE

RUSSIA AND THE ARABS: BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE MIDDLE EAST FROM THE COLD WAR TO THE PRESENT
By Yevgeny Primakov
Translated by Paul Gould
(Basic Books, 418 pp., $29.95)

Over the decades, many people in the West, and certainly most Israelis, came to view the Soviet Union and then Russia as a force for ill, if not evil, in the Middle East, and perhaps farther afield as well. From the 1950s onward, the Soviets and then the Russians armed Israel's enemies (Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and recently Russia appear to have signed a deal with Tehran to sell it state-of-the-art S-300 anti-aircraft missiles that, if deployed, would seriously hamper an Israeli, or American, assault on Iran's nuclear installations). They consistently supported the Arab states and the Palestinians in international forums; prodded the Arabs into unnecessary wars (certainly in 1967 and in some ways also in 1956 and 1973); and, regionally, supported the worst of regimes and leaders—the Baathists of Syria and Iraq; the butcher of Sudan, Jaafar Nimeiri; Saddam Hussein; and Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, to name just a few. That is quite a record.

Indeed, on several occasions Soviet troops directly confronted the Israeli Air Force. In 1970, during the Israeli-Egyptian "War of Attrition" along the Suez Canal, Soviet-manned surface-to-air missile batteries engaged the IAF and "pushed" it eastward, and Israeli pilots downed five Soviet-piloted MiG interceptors; in the final moments of war in 1973, Soviet crews fired a salvo of Scud surface-to-surface missiles at Israeli troops in Sinai. On two occasions, the Soviets threatened to intervene massively and directly against Israel, in 1956 and 1973—on the former occasion even hinting at unleashing nuclear weapons. (Soviet Prime Minister Nikolai Bulganin threatened Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion in early November, saying that "the existence of Israel" was "in question" if it persisted in its campaign against the Egyptian army in Sinai.) So the Israelis

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saw the Soviets and then the Russians, as hostile, cynical, and brutal. (Soviet behavior over the years in other parts of the world added nothing positive to Moscow's image.)

Now along comes Yevgeny Primakov, an old Soviet and Russian Middle East hand, a former *Pravda* correspondent, academic, and KGB operative (the distinction between the three was never clear—it appears that he was with the KGB, code name "Maksim," when he served with *Pravda* and as a member of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations in Moscow), former director of the SVR, Russia's foreign intelligence service (the KGB's successor organization), Russia's foreign minister from 1996 to 1998 and then, briefly, prime minister in 1998–1999—along comes this man to make the case for the defense. Many readers might sense that he is not exactly a knight in shining objective armor. But this is the most thoroughgoing account from the Russian perspective that I know. Here and there it is revelatory, and adds something to our historical knowledge.

Primakov's message is simple: Russia never sinned, except perhaps marginally. True, Stalin in his later years was a rabid anti-Semite—Primakov reproduces two letters from Lavrenty Beria, the head of the KGB, one discounting the so-called Doctors' Plot as so much Judeophobic propaganda ("deputy State Security Minister Mikhail Ryumin … fabricated the story of an undercover terrorist ring of doctors") and the other directly implicating Stalin in the murder of Solomon Mikhoels, the noted Yiddish actor. But Russia supported the new state of Israel in 1948, politically and with arms, which the United States refused to supply. Primakov adds that "the Soviet Union was the first to recognize the State of Israel" (which is wrong: the United States was the first); and consistently sought, since the 1950s, an Israeli-Arab accommodation. In his account, it even strove manfully—with Primakov himself often as point man, visiting guerrilla leaders in remote caves—to resolve internal Arab disputes, as in Yemen and Kurdistan.

Primakov gives a roseate general survey of Soviet and Russian policies in the Middle East since World War II, with chapters devoted to the Soviet role in successive Middle Eastern crises (1948, 1956, 1967, 1973) and to the relations between the Soviet Union and then Russia and each of the main regional protagonists—the Palestinians, Israel, Iraq, Lebanon, the Kurds, Syria, and Egypt. If things went wrong in the Middle East—wars, assassinations, massacres—it was no fault of the Russians, who were throughout well-meaning, peace-loving, and progressive: as kind as lambs. And who would know better, implies the author, than Primakov himself, who was there at every turn, in every hot spot, doing Kosygin's and Brezhnev's and Andropov's and Putin's bidding, fighting the good fight against corrupt, exploitative, bloody-minded, and mendacious imperialists and their regional cat's paws?

Consider the Six-Day War and its aftermath. In fact, the war was triggered by Soviet disinformation and "warnings" to Egypt and Syria that Israel was massing troops on its northern border for an assault on Damascus. This prompted the Egyptian dispatch of armored divisions into Sinai on May 14-15, 1967, and the expulsion by Egypt of UNEF, the international peacekeeping force monitoring the Egypt-Israel border, and the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping and aircraft. These provoked Israel's assault on Egypt's airfields and ground forces in Sinai on June 5. But what does Primakov tell us?

> It was alleged that the Kremlin had encouraged Egypt's bellicosity in the months before the war.… Much is made of the fact that the Soviet government passed Nasser information … that Israeli troops were massing on the border with Syria and that an invasion was planned for May 18-22.… Israel, of course, denied that it had any such plans. The Soviet ambassador in Tel Aviv was invited to travel to the Syrian border to see for himself that there were no troops gathering for an assault. The ambassador quite rightly turned down the invitation. He had no desire to participate in a cover-up of Israel's military intentions, and he was fully aware that he would only be taken to places where neither Israeli soldiers nor military hardware were in evidence.

Primakov's account is flawed in two ways. The Israeli-Syrian border is actually quite short, and Israel has very little territorial depth along it. Had Dmitri Chuvakhin, the ambassador, gone north, he would have noted the military preparations and concentrations (the Russians had spoken of "10-12 brigades," a force necessitating also a massive mobilization of reserves), had there been any. An armored brigade on the move consists of three hundred to four hundred vehicles, half of them twenty- to thirty-yard-long transporters, and on a narrow road (all of Israel's roads were narrow then) it stretches for several miles. Likewise, a mass mobilization of reserves was also something that a state the size of Israel could not have concealed. Israel would certainly have allowed Chuvakhin to look wherever he wanted. The reason that he declined—and it seems that he was repeatedly invited to inspect the border and repeatedly declined—was because Moscow knew that the allegation was utterly without substance. There were no troop concentrations and no mobilization.

This was confirmed at the time by General Odd Bull, the head of the U.N. Truce Supervision Organisation, and his observers, who regularly inspected the area. Primakov makes no mention of this. Nor does he refer to the memoirs of General Muhammad Fawzi, the Egyptian army's chief of staff, who had been sent to Syria by Nasser on May 14 to verify the Soviet "reports." Fawzi recalled: "I did not find any concrete evidence to support the information received. On the contrary, aerial photographs taken by Syrian reconnaissance on 12 and 13 May showed no change in normal [Israeli] military positions."

Why exactly Moscow misinformed the Egyptians and Syrians in early May about troop concentrations remains a mystery. Perhaps Moscow genuinely feared that the Israelis intended at some point to attack their client regime in Damascus and wanted the Egyptians to deter them by posing a challenge in the south. Perhaps Soviet intelligence simply made a mistake. Whatever the case, Moscow's actions unleashed the dogs of war.

Primakov is probably right that Egypt's provocative steps in the third week of May 1967—pushing armor into Sinai, which had been effectively demilitarized since 1956; expelling the U.N. peacekeepers; and closing the Straits of Tiran—were designed not as preliminaries to launching a war but "to intimidate Israel" and gain a bloodless political victory. Primakov, ever the admirer of Nasser, even suggests that expelling the U.N. force was "the doing of the Egyptian military rather than the high command." In any event, he wants us to believe that the Soviets were blameless: "The Soviet Union supported Egypt's actions during the runup to the conflict … because it thought they lessened, rather than increased, the likelihood of an all-out war." I'm not sure that even an avid Communist would understand this reasoning.

It is something of a revelation, or another bit of post-Soviet disinformation,

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to have Primakov go on to describe frantic Soviet efforts in late May and early June to stave off war by organizing a meeting in Moscow between Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol and Nasser. (If true, this would contradict the main conclusion of *Foxbats Over Dimona*, a recent book by Isabella Ginor and Gideon Remez, who argued that the Soviets deliberately engineered the war in order to create an opportunity to destroy Israel's nuclear plant in Dimona.) Primakov says that Eshkol gave his consent, but Nasser, "because of strong objections from the Syrian prime minister Yusuf Zuaiyin and President Nureddin Atassi," refused. (Again Primakov lets Nasser off the hook.)

Switching fronts, Primakov then tells us that on June 10, the last day of the Six-Day War, "Israeli troops advanced on Damascus." The Soviets promptly threatened Israel with "sanctions" and severed relations with Jerusalem. His implication is that the threat halted Israel's advance on the Syrian capital—a canard if there ever was one. Israeli troops on June 9 and June 10 had simply occupied the Golan Heights, halting of their own volition (and because of the U.N. Security Council cease-fire resolution) at Kuneitra. Damascus was never on their agenda.

In the wake of the Six-Day War, the Arab League unanimously resolved not to recognize Israel, not to negotiate, and not to make peace—the famous "three no's" of Khartoum—and the Security Council passed Resolution 242, positing a land-for-peace deal between the combatants. In discussing these historic resolutions, Primakov makes the valid point, quoting Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, that "the unrealistic, extremist line taken by the Algerian and Syrian leaderships" had intimidated the more reasonable Arab leaders into extremism, lest they be "accused of making too many concessions"—which, indeed, describes the norm of group dynamics and radicalizing conformity that has characterized the Arab states in their attitude to Israel and, at times, the West for the past seventy years. Thus, for example, to this day all the Arab states—including Egypt and Jordan, which have made peace with Israel—continue unreservedly and publicly to uphold the Palestinian refugees' "right of return," despite knowing the demand to be unrealistic and inimical to Israel's continued existence.

Primakov describes Resolution 242 as calling for "the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the territories it occupied during the 1967 Six-Day War" and "recognition of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every state in the region [especially Israel]." But a paragraph later he admits that the binding English version refers to "territories" rather than "the territories," a difference that was designed to provide room for eventual minor border changes. More worryingly, Primakov in one or two places actually implies that Israel's legitimate borders, to which it should eventually withdraw, are the U.N. partition resolution lines of 1947, which sought to create a Jewish state 25 percent smaller and even more unnaturally bounded than the one that emerged from the war in 1948. And lastly, Primakov fails altogether to mention Israel's secret offer to Syria and Egypt, on June 19, 1967, to withdraw completely from the Golan Heights and the Sinai Peninsula in exchange for their demilitarization and peace, an offer the two implicitly rejected as they signed on to the Khartoum "no's."

During the interwar years, between 1967 and 1973, and after the October war, Primakov was the chief Soviet representative in secret meetings with the Israeli leadership. I believe that this book is the first published description of those talks. He vividly describes a meeting with the hard-nosed Golda Meir, Eshkol's successor, in August 1971: "If there's a [new] war, we'll fight that war," she told him. "If any aircraft get in our way, we'll shoot them down"—obliquely referring to the downing, in the previous year, during the Israeli-Egyptian "War of Attrition" along the Suez Canal, of the Soviet-piloted MiGs—something that Primakov, out of embarrassment, does not mention. Primakov responded: "Could you clarify whose aircraft you intend to shoot down?" And Golda (according to Primakov) replied: "In 1948 we shot down five British planes."

The Soviet effort, as Primakov describes it, to get an Israeli-Egyptian or Israeli–pan-Arab peace deal, or even a partial agreement, as proposed by Anwar Sadat, on the re-opening of the Suez Canal, failed. "The Israeli negotiators clearly had no wish to discuss concrete issues, and a chance to make real progress toward a peace settlement was wasted," he hastily concludes. But were the Arab states, including Sadat's Egypt, really ready for peace with Israel in 1971? I am not so sure. Regarding even Egypt, the evidence is ambiguous.

On the lighter side, Primakov describes how Shalheveth Freier, head of Israel's Atomic Energy Commission, escorted him on a visit to downtown Tel Aviv. "I don't remember what film we saw, but I was surprised to see how similar the people in the packed auditorium were to Arabs, not just in their appearance, but in their behavior too—whistling when the film snapped in the projector—it was like being in a cinema in Damascus or Baghdad." (I have never seen a film in Damascus or Baghdad, but this sounds about right.) Interestingly, Primakov's description of Menachem Begin, whom he met in Jerusalem in September 1977, shortly after the latter assumed the premiership, is far warmer than his description of Shimon Peres, whom he calls "particularly antagonistic." Primakov appears to have been won over by Begin's description of the Russians as "the greatest, most noble, most kind-hearted of people, as I'm always telling my young assistants." "There was nothing put on about the way he said it," remarks Primakov. "Absent from our meeting was the combative stance our Israeli counterparts [Meir, Peres, Yitzhak Rabin] had assumed in the previous rounds of talks."

He also has a kind word for Benjamin Netanyahu, who "struck me as a man we could do business with… [he] was willing to engage in a frank and open exchange of views, which, I admit, impressed me greatly. On the whole, I get on with Netanyahu much better than most of my counterparts do—and not just those from the Arab countries, but from the United States too.… He understood, possibly even better than his predecessors, that it was vital to reach a settlement with Syria.… He was a man I could be straight with." Perhaps, in speaking of Netanyahu, Primakov is hinting at the current situation. And indeed, this book is not merely about the past. Primakov confronts also the most serious contemporary issues—the nuclear threat, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and Hamas—and future perils.

But having toed the party line for decades, Primakov remains a solid party-liner—and one encounters assertions that might severely test the credulity and reason of even the most understanding and conciliatory of Western liberals. Take the issue of nuclear weaponry. "It was Israel's possession of nuclear arms … that had made it so difficult to find a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. Israel's nuclear capability had goaded Arab and other Middle Eastern countries and organi-

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zations to seek ways of reducing their 'handicap,'" and "Israel's possession of nuclear weapons has demonstrably dragged the region into a nuclear arms race." A survey of the relevant history subverts all these assertions. According to reports, Israel has had a nuclear armory since 1967–1968, its nuclear project having been launched a decade earlier. Yet none of its warring neighbors was prompted or provoked into embarking on a countervailing nuclear program during the past forty years. If anything, Israel's nuclear capability has made for Arab realism and accommodationism: Sadat reportedly opted for peace with Israel mainly because he feared that an escalation of belligerency would ultimately lead to Egypt's destruction. And Israel's possession of nuclear weapons may well have been decisive in limiting both Sadat's and Hafez Al Assad's objectives when planning the October war of 1973. So a good case can be made that Israel's nuclear arsenal has been a cause for caution and a moderating realism in the Middle East.

But Iran's current advance toward nuclear-weapons capability and production—and there is no serious Western leader who doubts that those are Iran's aims—is clearly destabilizing the Middle East and triggering a regional arms race. To begin with, it raises the prospect of an American, Israeli, or joint American-Israeli campaign to pre-emptively destroy Ahmadinejad's nuclear facilities, which may provoke a full-scale Middle Eastern war. Even puny Jordan is now considering embarking on a nuclear program, and Egypt, Turkey, and some Gulf states are not far behind. In part, it is the nature of the Iranian beast that accounts for the regional fears. Israel, by contrast, has never overtly or covertly threatened its neighbors with destruction or with the use of its nuclear arsenal, and its leaders and generals are perceived as rational. But Iran's rulers are perceived by most Middle Eastern leaders as aggressive and subversive of the regional order. They are widely viewed as irrational religious fanatics.

To be sure, it is not clear that Iran initiated its nuclear-weapons program with Israel in mind. It was started under the aegis of Khomeini during the Iran-Iraq war, and the Iranians may have had Iraq in their sights. Or, more generally, they may have sought to overawe Iraq and their other Sunni Arab neighbors and attain regional hegemony, untrammeled by a fear of American or Israeli intercession. Still, as Iran draws closer to a bomb, the focus has narrowed, and its only conceivable immediate target is the Jewish state. Without doubt, most Israelis today view Iran's nuclear program as primarily aimed at them and their existence.

Yet Primakov's chapter about the issue—titled "A Nuclear Shadow over the Arab-Israeli Conflict"—deals almost exclusively with the Israeli bomb. He tells us that "the danger of a nuclear-armed Israel is that it has been, and still is, deeply involved in virtually all of the conflicts that have roiled the Middle East." What does this mean? That Israel will unleash its nuclear weapons in one of the conflicts in which it is involved? And is it true that Israel is involved in "virtually all" the conflicts in the region? Does he mean the American war in Iraq, or the Sunni-Shia hostilities there, since 2003; or the current conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan; or those in Sudan's Darfur region or in northern Yemen; or between Turks and Kurds in southeastern Turkey? How is Israel involved in any of those conflicts?

Primakov asserts that "no legitimate arguments can be made to support Israel's possession of nuclear arms." How about Arab threats and efforts to destroy Israel since its inception? How about Iran's threats to destroy Israel? Were these not legitimate reasons for Ben-Gurion and Israel's leaders to have created and maintained a powerful deterrent? Does Russia have a more "legitimate" argument for its possession of nuclear weapons? Has anyone in the past threatened, or does anyone in the present threaten, Russia's existence?

Primakov implies that Israel should divest itself of its atomic arsenal. He criticizes Israel's destruction of the Osirak reactor in Iraq in 1981, which was motivated by the fear that Saddam Hussein intended to build and use nuclear weapons against Israel. "In carrying out this raid Begin had … flouted international law and the United Nations Charter," complains Primakov. I assume he is speaking of that same "international law" violated most recently by Russia in Georgia and Chechnya and, more distantly, by the Soviet government for which he worked in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Finland, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia. But there is one difference: none of these countries or peoples ever remotely threatened Russia's existence or its vital interests.

As to Russia and Iran in the present, Primakov has this to say: "Some cynics have sought to make political capital out of the Iranian situation by directing accusations at Russia." He sweepingly denies that Russia is "helping Iran to build a nuclear arsenal." But he fails to mention all the very pertinent indirect ways Russia is doing just that—from constructing the nuclear reactor in Bushehr to supplying Iran with weaponry that could stymie a possible strike against the Iranian nuclear installations to Russia's subversion of every effort to threaten or impose sanctions that might persuade Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions.

Primakov dismisses the idea of imposing sanctions against Iran as a way of halting its nuclearization. "Russia, China and other countries

Years After the Garden

Years after the garden closed on Adam
a thousand thousand gardens take its place
(hold my hand, I hear the waters rising)
roses, lemons, lilac, hemlock, grape.

A thousand thousand gardens take its place.
Is each an Eden waiting to be lost?
Roses, lemons, lilac, hemlock, grape.
What was God thinking when he made the apple?

Is each an Eden waiting to be lost?
Seeds of knowledge, carelessness, and greed.
What was God thinking when he made the apple?
Did he do it only for the story?

Seeds of knowledge, carelessness, and greed—
they say the ice cap is already melting.
Did he do it only for the story?
Meringues of childhood melted on the tongue.

They say the ice cap is already melting.
The angel still waits with his flaming sword.
Meringues of childhood melted on the tongue,
but innocence alone will never save us.

The angel still waits with his flaming sword:
flowers and vegetables, forests tremble.
Innocence alone will never save us.
How beautiful the world is in the morning.

Flowers and vegetables, forests tremble.
How beautiful the world is in the morning.
Years ago the garden closed on Adam.
Hold my hand, I hear the waters rising.

LINDA PASTAN

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believe such sanctions would be counterproductive.... On the contrary, as the example of Iraq has taught us, Iranian politics would become increasingly radicalized." (How, exactly?) And of course Primakov opposes bombing the Iranian nuclear installations—though he offers his readers some rather lame reasoning: "It can be predicted with some certainty that bombing Iran would lead to increased terrorist activity and possibly destabilize a number of moderate secular regimes, mainly in the Arab states. It would add new fuel to the wave of anti-Americanism." I find it difficult to believe that any increase in global "anti-Americanism" unduly perturbs Primakov, who is a strong supporter of Putin. And a destabilized Middle East or world is surely a more dire prospect than the destabilization of some "moderate secular" Middle Eastern regimes.

The foregoing reasoning is rendered all the more baffling by Primakov's clear-sightedness regarding the Iranian nuclear threat: "The prospect [of Iran acquiring nuclear weapons] along with repeated calls from its leadership to wipe Israel off the map, makes for a particularly volatile combination.... If Iran made a nuclear breakthrough, it could quite possibly wreck the nonproliferation treaty, paving the way for numerous other countries to get their hands on nuclear weapons.... This would create a radically different and significantly more dangerous situation in the world, not least because international terrorist organizations would gain easier access to nuclear weapons." Primakov concludes his discussion of the Iranian nuclear threat by writing that President Obama's conciliatory policy has "prompted a worldwide sigh of relief. By the time the reader picks up this book, most of the blanks in Iran's nuclear 'crossword puzzle' will have been filled in. I would like to believe that by then we will be able to talk about this nuclear threat in the past tense." Fat chance.

A book on Russia and the contemporary Middle East cannot avoid at least a passing mention of Muslim fundamentalism. Primakov the diplomat wends his way between the drops, trying to stay high and dry. He refers in passing to Samuel Huntington and then states that "the emergence of international terrorism ... is allegedly linked directly to the religion of Islam. There is plenty of evidence to show how erroneous it is to conflate the two ... only ignoramuses or spiteful Islamophobes could equate one of the oldest and most widely practiced religions in the world with terrorism.... Clearly, it is not because Islam itself is intrinsically extremist." Perhaps. But almost all the world's terrorism emanates from Muslim societies and is directed against non-Muslims (in the Philippines, Thailand, Nigeria, Sudan, Chechnya, India, London, Spain, the United States, and Israel) or against other Muslims seen as collaborators with the infidels (in Pakistan, Gaza, Afghanistan, and Indonesia). Clearly non-violent and moderate Muslims have been relatively unsuccessful in countering the "extremists." The extremists seem to enjoy far greater popularity in the Muslim "street," from Karachi to Gaza, Cairo, and Marrakesh, than the moderates.

But Primakov has a point when, a little later, he differentiates "between Islamic fundamentalism and Islamic extremism." He seems to be saying that most Muslim Arabs are "fundamentalist," meaning that they believe in God and his role as an agent in the temporal world, and that the Koran holds the "truth" and is God-given and must be interpreted literally. Primakov writes that "Islamic fundamentalism is the building of mosques, the observance of Islamic rituals, and mutual assistance between fellow believers. But it is only when Islamic fundamentalism uses force to impose Islamic rule over a state or a society that it takes on an aggressive or extremist form." And immediately he relativizes the discussion—a common rhetorical strategy among progressives in the West—and implies that Islam and Christianity are not so different. "Throughout history," he remarks, "Christian fundamentalism" turned into "Christian or Catholic extremism: We need only think of the Reformation or the Crusades." Primakov fails to note that the Christian West has changed rather considerably over the past five centuries. Many if not most in the West are non-believers, and few are "fundamentalists," and none strap bombs to their bodies and blow up mosques, buses, and funeral processions.

What is to blame for Muslim "extremism"? Primakov mentions economic polarization between the rich West and the Islamic and often poor East. But some of the terrorists are from well-to-do backgrounds, he notes—so that can't be it. No, he says, the "extremism" is a product of the "breakdown of dialogue" between the civilizations. And one reason for that, he tells us, "is an unthinking obsession on the part of the United States ... with 'exporting' its model of democracy to other countries.... Worse still, its 'export' involved the use of military force." So in the end it is the West that is to blame—that same West which, quite incidentally, humbled the Soviet Union. But now Russia has risen from those ashes, and Primakov assigns it a crucial role in the global clash of civilizations. Russia, with its Christian majority and Muslim minority, is a natural "bridge" and "example of peaceful cohabitation," he tells us. Really? Has Primakov ever heard of Ingushetia, Dagestan, or Chechnya? "Peaceful cohabitation," indeed.

On Hamas, Primakov displays the sort of naïveté (or dissimulation) that often characterizes the pages of *The New York Review of Books*. He fails to understand that radical Islamist true believers do not compromise their principles: they mean what they say and will not, normally, say the opposite, on the strategic plane, to gain tactical advantage. Primakov tells us that Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Shamir "had actually been terrorists themselves"—so it makes no sense for Israel not to negotiate with Hamas on the grounds that it is a terrorist organization. Moreover, "we can't begin to win the battle against international terrorism until we understand the attitude of ordinary Muslims ... toward organizations like Hamas." Hamas, you see, has "two interweaving strands to its ideology: one Islamic and the other nationalistic. If its first achievement was to create an Islamic state in the region [where, in Gaza?], its main objective now is to end the Israeli occupation. There are grounds to believe that the nationalist strand ... will gather strength at the expense of its religious element, now that it has won power.... It is telling that Hamas did not even mention its aim of introducing a power structure based on Sharia law once it had won the [2006 Palestinian] elections."

Primakov is quite right: it *is* "telling," but not in the way he suggests. It is telling about Hamas's clever and indirect approach: Hamas may not have announced the imposition of *sharia* law, but it has gradually and relentlessly imposed it in the area that it has controlled since 2007, the Gaza Strip, without fanfare, without proclamations. Women are forced to wear headscarves; separate male and female venues are enforced (in private weddings, at beaches, and so on); no cinemas operate; and Christians and their sites (a library, a bookshop, a school) are intimidated and forced out or closed down. Sometimes it is the Hamas police that are the explicit agents of coercion; and sometimes Hamas allows "extremist" (to use Primakov's phrase) gangs to do

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the dirty work. But the work gets done—and so Gaza increasingly resembles Iran. And this, according to Hamas's constitution or charter of 1988—which Primakov nowhere mentions—is what the organization intends for all of Palestine, should it attain dominion.

Primakov is taken in by Hamas's offers of a "truce" with Israel, as if a "truce" is tantamount to acceptance of Israel and agreement to a two-state settlement. No Hamas leader has ever said the organization will recognize Israel, or give up its claim to all of Palestine, or cease the struggle to attain this goal. Sure, Hamas spokesmen, for good tactical reasons, have occasionally spoken of a five- or ten-year truce, if Israel agrees to withdraw to the 1967 borders and accepts the refugees' right of return. But a full return to these borders and even the start of a mass Arab refugee return will spell instant chaos and the demise of the Jewish state, which will be overwhelmed by Arab numbers. And that, of course, is Hamas's goal. Until it redefines its goal, meaning until it changes its charter, there is no reason to believe that Hamas's objectives have really changed, however much chaff it scatters before credulous foreign commentators.

Occasionally Primakov supplies real insights, and here and there he makes noteworthy admissions. He tackles head-on the problem, moral and political, posed by the so-called "progressive" or "socialist" Arab regimes in the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, who, while enjoying Soviet beneficence, were busy suppressing, usually very brutally, their local communist parties. Primakov's hero Nasser, incidentally, was one of the most prominent of these suppressors. The Arab world's communists in the twentieth century failed to achieve even a modicum of power anywhere in the Middle East, but Primakov acknowledges their courage and offers this encomium: "But it would be wrong to conclude that the communist movement of the Arab world has played no part in its history.... It paved the way for moderate forces to evolve across all Arab nations." I wonder. Would Jordan's King Abdullah II, or his great-grandfather, Abdullah I, two leading "moderates," have agreed with such an analysis? They seem to have emerged as "moderates" without any connection to communism and its works. But the Soviets had at least one success, according to Primakov: "Five government ministers [in Yemen] speak Russian." I wonder how useful that is now.

Throughout the book, Primakov lauds this or that Arab regime (Nasser's Egypt, Nimeiri's Sudan, a succession of Yemeni leaders) as "socialist" or "progressive." But then, in the book's final pages, he at last offers the reader a real illumination: "There was no 'socialist phase' in the postcolonial development of the Arab nations.... What was left was Arab nationalism, which in effect abandoned revolutionary social reform." But such illuminations are few and far between, whereas the propaganda is constant. Consider this gem: "The Soviet Union never conspired to bring down an Arab monarchy; Moscow always respected the Arab kingdoms." Or: "Even well before the bloodbath in Chechnya, both Russia and the former Soviet Union took a firm stance against the Palestinians' using terrorism to fight for their rights. This subject was always raised—I repeat, *always*—whenever Russian officials held talks with Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Hamas, or any other Palestinian groups. It still is." Apparently, all the reports of logistical and operational support by the KGB and its Eastern European sub-contractors for Palestinian terror groups in Europe during the late '60s and '70s are just so much "capitalist" hogwash.

Russia and the Arabs is a disappointing and dispiriting book. As an effort at historiography interspersed with personal reminiscences, I would have expected a former SVR director and prime minister to have made use of the core files of the relevant Soviet and Russian agencies regarding the successive Middle Eastern crises. But there is almost no trace of such research and documentation in the book, and there are almost no footnotes. Primakov seems to have relied for his reconstructions of history almost exclusively on his memory, on some personal notes and diaries, on some newspaper clippings (including his own dispatches for *Pravda*), and on a very small number of books, most of them memoirs, mostly by non-Russians. Alongside tidbits of enlightenment there is a great deal of distortion, obfuscation, and agitprop.

It is not always clear when Primakov is telling us what he really thinks and when, with national or personal interests in mind, he is playing to this or that audience. Or perhaps the problem is that if you pass most of your life in a cynical, airless, and phony environment, you lose the ability to weigh things with clarity and objectivity. But this is the book that Henry Kissinger says "provides illuminating insight." In a decade or so, perhaps, a historian will write a book about the court of Czar Putin, and Primakov will scurry and strut in and out of its pages, here supplying analysis, there soothing the brow of a Muslim with grievances (oh, there are so many of them), here fixing a retired assassin's pension, there filling in a bill of lading for yet one more shipment of AK-47s to a godforsaken desert or mountaintop. ◆

Ruth Franklin
THE WILD HEART

WHY THIS WORLD: A BIOGRAPHY OF CLARICE LISPECTOR
By Benjamin Moser
(Oxford University Press, 479 pp., $29.95)

No one has ever known quite how to understand Clarice Lispector. Though she considered herself fully a Brazilian, having lived in the country since infancy, both her critics and her admirers often described her accent and her diction as "foreign"—perhaps unsure how else to characterize her unconventional wrestlings with the Portuguese language. Her first novel, *Near to the Wild Heart*, created a sensation, but she struggled to find publishers for nearly all of her subsequent work—nine novels, as well as collections of short stories, essays, and journalism. The English translator of her most celebrated novel confesses that her language defies his best attempts to render it, and wonders if the book can even be called a novel at all. Hélène Cixous, one of Lispector's most devoted readers, came up with an oft-cited yet exceedingly ambiguous paean to her genius: imagine, Cixous proclaimed, "if Kafka had been a woman. If Rilke had been a Jewish Brazilian born in the Ukraine. If Rimbaud had been a mother, if he had reached the age of fifty. If Heidegger had been able to stop being German."

What exactly does all that name-dropping mean? Benjamin Moser quotes these lines in the introduction to his ambitious

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biography, which amounts to his own attempt at the massive project of trying to understand Lispector. The work is challenging enough: Moser must contend also with her life, which included an unhappy, poverty-stricken childhood; early literary success followed by years of writing beauty columns for money; an itinerant decade and a half as the wife of a diplomat; and a pathetic finale marked by increasingly unsettled behavior until her death, the day before her fifty-seventh birthday, from ovarian cancer. Moser shows no signs of biographer's fatigue with his subject—a woman whose friends often complained about the exhausting demands she made on their time and their sympathy. Indeed, he leaves no room to doubt his admiration for Lispector, delighting in repeating (sometimes more than once) the numerous superlatives that have been conferred on her. Elizabeth Bishop said she was "better than Borges." A Brazilian journalist remarked at the height of her fame that "Clarice Lispector has ceased to be a name and become a phenomenon in our literature." Moser himself writes that she had "one of the most extraordinary careers in twentieth-century literature" and that her work, taken as a whole, constitutes "perhaps the greatest spiritual autobiography of the twentieth century."

Better than Borges? This seems a bit much to say about a writer whose most celebrated work treats at considerable length a woman's thoughts in the act of killing a cockroach. The rest of Bishop's statement, made in a letter to Ilse and Kit Barber Lowell in 1962, is rarely quoted: "Actually I think she is better than JL Borges—who is good, but not all that good!" Unfortunately, it is nearly impossible for a non-Portuguese-speaker to evaluate Lispector's achievement, because not much of her extremely varied body of work is available in English. The "sensational" first novel was only recently reissued after a long period out of print. English readers without access to a university library are left with a scattering of her late books, including the uncategorizable non-novel *The Passion According to G. H.*, the work that so flummoxed its translator. But what there is gives a sense of an exceedingly diffuse talent, in which sharp turns of description and speech are eventually drowned out by a muffled metaphysics.

Lispector seems to have wanted to be perceived as a philosopher first and a novelist second. Her novels play with different forms of existential philosophy, and her fans have often seen mystical currents in her work. Moser ties this element, altogether unconvincingly, to her birthplace, the Ukrainian province of Podolia, which happens also to have been the birthplace of the Hasidic movement; two of the legendary Jewish mystics, the Baal Shem Tov and Nachman of Breslov, died nearby. Pinkhas, her father, was a shopkeeper who in his spare time studied Talmud (not the most mystical of Jewish intellectual pursuits) and, more unusually, read literature. He was also interested in mathematics, and may have inspired his daughter's appreciation for the mystical values of numbers, which she was known to consider while planning out the length of her books. His wife Mania cared for their three daughters (Clarice was the youngest) with some difficulty, as she suffered from a disabling illness that led to her paralysis and finally to her early death in 1930, when Clarice was not yet ten. The specifics of this illness remain unclear, but Moser makes a convincing case that it was syphilis, contracted when she was raped by Russian soldiers during one of the many pogroms inflicted upon Jewish villages in that area during the tumultuous interwar period.

The family left Ukraine shortly after Clarice's birth, in the winter of 1920–1921, traveling via Kishinev, Bucharest, and Prague to Hamburg, where they boarded a ship bound for Brazil. They settled in the northeastern city of Maceió, where Mania's sister and her husband had already emigrated, and the family all took Brazilian names. (Clarice had been born Chaya.) In Moser's view, the trauma of her early childhood was responsible for one of Lispector's primary philosophical ideas: her belief that, in Moser's words, "there was no more reason for her existence than there was for the cockroach's. Blind luck was the only reason she had survived the Ukrainian horrors when so many millions of others had perished. . . . To understand the random animal nature of the world was necessarily to reject . . . conventional morality."

Lispector decided to become a writer as a teenager. "I was a confused and perplexed adolescent who had a mute and intense question: 'what is the world like? and why this world?' " she would later write in one of her columns. "Later I learned many things. But the adolescent's question remained, mute and nagging." Like so many adolescents, she fell under the spell of Hesse's *Steppenwolf*, with its romantic vision of the artist's dual, dueling nature. "These people all have two souls," Hesse wrote, "two beings inside them, in whom the divine and the diabolic, the mother's blood and the father's, the capacity for happiness and for suffering, are as tightly and inimically bound as the wolf and the man were inside Harry [the 'Steppenwolf']." (This sentiment was hardly original to Hesse; he lifted the "two souls" line directly from *Faust*.)

The motif of two clashing characters, whether embodied by one person or played out in the dynamic between two people, would be a common one in Lispector's work, beginning with her first known published story, which appeared in a Brazilian magazine in 1940. The story presents a young male writer viewed from the perspective of his female lover, whom he has rejected for the sake of his art: "He said he needed special conditions in order to produce. . . . He went off to try to find the 'atmosphere.' " But at the end of the story the girl, taking a bath, exults in the sensuality of the water on her body and realizes that her lover would return to her, that (as Moser paraphrases) "she—the animal, the body, the woman—was stronger than his doubts."

Steppenwolf, not quite a novel itself, also inspired the structure of Lispector's works, in Moser's view. "Like many of Clarice's own future books," he writes, it is "a philosophical meditation hung on a fantastic, loosely constructed story." Her first novel, *Near to the Wild Heart*, takes up the two-souls theme again, but this time with what Moser calls a "Spinozistic conception." Artistic, passionate Joana is married to a "mediocre intellectual." Her husband has an affair with Lídia, a previous girlfriend, who becomes pregnant. The two women are continually contrasted: Joana is impetuous and animalistic, Lídia conventional and maternal. (The book's title comes from *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*: "He was alone. He was unheeded, happy, and near to the wild heart of life.") Joana's amoral nature brings her to a state close to transcendence. "Just as there is no meaningful separation between man and animal, between Joana and the cat or the snake, neither man nor animal is separate from God, the single, infinite, and eternal 'one substance' that is synonymous with Nature: one substance in constant transition," Moser explains. He traces much of this to Spinoza, noting that Lispector transcribed some of the novel's philosophic flights directly from the notes she had made in an anthology of his writings.

ANTHONY RUSSO

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This may well be the case, but Lispector is always more engaging and more original when she turns her attention to characters rather than abstractions. In one of the novel's climactic scenes, Joana delivers a passionate indictment of married life. "I bet you've spent your whole life wanting to get married," she says to Lídia. Lídia begins to reply—"Yes. Every woman …"—and Joana cuts her off:

> Not me. I didn't plan to marry.… Imagine: always having someone next to you, never to be alone—My God!… Even the fatigue of life has a certain beauty when borne alone and desperately.… But together, eating every day the same saltless bread, watching one's own defeat in the defeat of the other.… Not to mention the weight of the habits reflected in the habits of the other, the weight of the shared bed, the shared table, the shared life, preparing and threatening the shared death.

Like Irène Némirovsky, Lispector excels at the carefully chosen domestic detail that swells to encompass an entire life: the "saltless bread," the "weight of the shared bed." Interestingly, their lives and careers had similar beginnings: both writers were born in Ukraine and emigrated as children. And both fought tenaciously to throw off their origin and be recognized as full citizens of their adopted countries and cultures: Lispector, petitioning the president for Brazilian citizenship at the age of twenty-one, wrote that if she were "forced to return to Russia, [she] would feel irredeemably foreign there, without a friend, without a profession, without a hope."

And both had sensational debuts at remarkably young ages. *Near to the Wild Heart* was published in December 1943, when Lispector had just turned twenty-three, and it created what Moser describes as a "furor." "As I devoured the chapters the author was typing, it slowly dawned on me that this was an extraordinary literary revelation," said Francisco de Assis Barbosa, her colleague at the newspaper *A Noite*. "The excitement of Clarice, hurricane Clarice." The journalist Joel Silveira later said that "everyone wanted to know who that girl was." The book won a prize for the best debut novel of 1943, but the accolades did not stop there. One newspaper called it "the greatest debut novel a woman has ever written in all of Brazilian literature." Lêdo Ivo, a poet and friend of Lispector's, went further, describing it, in another oft-quoted remark, as "the greatest novel a woman has ever written in the Portuguese language." He was, however, only nineteen at the time.

All biographers mine their subjects' work for clues to their personal life, and Moser is forced to do so as well, especially since Lispector, intensely private, rarely spoke of her personal life to anyone but her close friends. It is impossible not to notice that she wrote *Near to the Wild Heart*, which takes as its subject the impossibility of marriage, during the year preceding her own marriage to the future diplomat Maury Gurgel Valente. Moser describes her married life as a "wobbly poise" between the figures of Joana and Lídia. "If, as Clarice said in reference to Joana, *Madame Bovary c'est moi*, Clarice was also Lídia, a conventional woman, a wife and a mother, a person who wished to live in peace with the world," he writes.

While Lispector seems to have been often happy in marriage and motherhood—the couple had two sons, born in 1948 and 1953—the diplomatic life took a toll on her professionally. Maury's postings included Naples, Bern, and Washington, D.C., and as she trailed after him around the world, she suffered from homesickness and lack of inspiration. "This Switzerland is a cemetery of sensations," she wrote in a letter to one of her sisters. Washington was a "vague and inorganic city.… It's beautiful, according to various laws of beauty that are not my own." Despite the sensation of her debut, she was unable to keep up the necessary contacts that could have made her publishing career a little smoother. Once they finally appeared, her second and third novels, *The Chandelier* and *The Besieged City*, bombed with reviewers, who found them too abstruse and allegorical. "Its hermeticism has the texture of the hermeticism of dreams," the Portuguese critic João Gaspar Simões wrote of *The Besieged City*. "May someone find the key." Even Moser can muster only that *The Chandelier* has a "glacial intensity."

In these novels Lispector was starting to experiment with the metaphysical obsessions that would come to dominate her prose. Her later works all strive to realize the same impossible challenge: how to express in writing her mystical vision of the union of words and things. "If I had to give a title to my life it would be: in search of the thing itself," she wrote in 1964. In *The Chandelier*, a character named Virginia shapes figurines out of mud, "a clear and tender material from which she could shape a world.… Little forms that meant nothing but which were in reality mysterious and calm. Sometimes tall like a tall tree, but they weren't trees, they weren't anything.… A work that would never end: that was the most beautiful and careful thing she had ever known." Lispector was well aware of the difficulty of her project—for her readers as well as for herself. But she showed a complete lack of interest in the experience of the reader. "It would be more attractive if I made it more attractive," she wrote in a short piece called "Novel" that is as close to a manifesto as anything she wrote. "Using, for example, some of the things that frame a life or a thing or a novel or a character. It is perfectly acceptable to make something attractive, except for the danger that a painting is a painting because it is in a frame. For reading, of course, I prefer something attractive, it fatigues me less.… In my writing, though, I must do without it. The experience was worthwhile, even if only for the person who wrote it." This could be called artistic purity, but it contains an undeniable element of perversity.

This technique reaches its epitome in *The Passion According to G. H.*, which Lispector wrote in "a quick outburst" at the end of 1963. The book is easy to summarize—a woman kills a cockroach and finds God—but impossible to define. Moser calls it "one of the great novels of the twentieth century," arguing that "in its ambition and eccentricity, in its sweeping redefinition of what a novel can be, *Passion* recalls peculiar masterpieces such as *Moby-Dick* and *Tristram Shandy*." Yet he continues, strangely, that "it is not, at least not in the first place, literature." Surely he means "fiction" rather than "literature." But even so, he leaves unexamined the question of how a book that may well not really be a novel can nonetheless be considered to be a great novel. *Moby-Dick* and *Tristram Shandy*, in their own ways, transformed conventional wisdom about the novel's form, yet both books

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are undeniably novels; they worked their transformations from within. "Are we to take G. H.'s story as fiction or as speculation on philosophical problems in and through the narration of what we would traditionally call a 'plot'?" Ronald W. Sousa asks in the introduction to his translation of the book. "Where does literature end and philosophy begin?"

But in a true philosophical novel—*The Magic Mountain*, say, or *The Plague*—neither literature nor philosophy should have to end anywhere. The interconnectedness of the two is the point of the form: the philosophical novel explores philosophy via the medium of literature. But not the other way around. This is why Plato's dialogues, though invented, are not philosophical novels: the literary elements are secondary to the philosophy. And this is also why *The Passion According to G. H.* should not be considered exactly a novel, but rather something more akin to the Platonic dialogues: a dramatic monologue chronicling a woman's existential crisis.

It starts off like a novel, though with distinct metaphysical undertones. The narrator says that she is going to "create what happened to me. Only because living isn't tellable.... I shall have to create upon life." She begins with the basics. She lives in an elegant penthouse apartment, but feels that she is living a "nonexistent life," as if within quotation marks: "All the while I was, more than just clean and correct, I was a pretty riposte." She recognizes herself only through external signs, such as the initials G. H. monogrammed on her luggage. On the day the novel takes place, she goes into the room of her maid, who has recently quit, and finds a charcoal mural that distresses her: a drawing of a nude man, a nude woman, and "a dog more nude than dogs really are." It violates her sense of decorum, "the quotation marks that made me a reference to myself."

In this agitated state she opens the door of the wardrobe and discovers the cockroach. It pokes its head out, and she slams the wardrobe door, trapping it but not killing it. As she goes to deal it the death blow, she sees the expression on its face, level with her own. "What I saw," the narrator says, "with a compulsiveness so painful and so frightening and so innocent, what I saw was life looking back at me.... I had looked upon the live cockroach and had discovered in it my deepest life identity." And here the mystical element takes over:

> Then, all at once, I opened my eyes and saw full-on the room's limitless vastness, that room that resounded in silence—Hellish laboratory.
>
> The room, the unexpected room. My entrance into it had finally become complete.
>
> This room had only one way in, and it was a narrow one: through the cockroach. The cockroach that filled the room with a resonance that was in the last analysis open, the resonances of its rattlesnake bells in the desert. By a perilous road I had reached the deep breach in the wall that was that room ... and the break formed a wide natural hall like in a cave.... And in this desert of great seductions, the creatures: I and the live cockroach. Life, my love, is one great seduction where everything that exists is seduced. That room that was desert and therefore primitively alive. I had reached nothingness, and the nothingness was live and moist.

And so on in this vein for a hundred more pages. Lispector later said of this book that of all her novels, it was the one that best corresponded to her own demands as a writer—the one that best embodies the union of words and things. But while there are moments of exquisite writing—the narrator says of the cockroach that it was "as old as a fossilized fish ... as old as salamanders, and chimeras, and leviathans"—the metaphysics is impossible to follow in this form, and thus also impossible to take seriously. To quote bits and pieces from it would be absurd; but to quote entire passages would be even more absurd. In trying to be at once a novel and a philosophical treatise, the book succeeds at neither.

During the early '60s, Lispector seems to have undergone a personality change. In 1959 she separated from her husband and returned to Brazil with their sons. To support them on her own, she took on all sorts of newspaper work, including a beauty column that was secretly underwritten by Pond's and another six-day-a-week column that she ghost-wrote for a celebrity. It was during this period, perhaps owing to the stress of needing to generate income, that her behavior became erratic: she was known for calling her friends (including a married lover) at all hours of the night, and for wearing "scandalous" makeup. To make matters more difficult, her elder son began showing signs of schizophrenia and required increasingly more serious treatment. Moser repeats a heartbreaking anecdote about a dinner party she gave at which her son spent the entire evening walking around the table with his hands covering his face. "Clarice pretended that she didn't notice him and continued on diplomatically with the conversation. But she did notice, and the guests knew she did, because though they sat there for hours, Clarice forgot to serve the food."

At around the same time she met Elizabeth Bishop, who wrote enthusiastically about her to Robert Lowell, though with reservations. "Her novels are NOT good," Bishop judged, but she loved Lispector's short stories: "almost like the stories I've always thought should be written about Brazil—Tchekovian, slightly sinister and fantastic." Bishop translated five of the stories herself and promoted them to American publishers, but just as she was about to submit them, Lispector vanished—typical of her increasingly unpredictable behavior.

Later published in the *Kenyon Review*, two of the stories justify Bishop's estimation. "A Hen" is a short parable about a hen who flies away just as the family that keeps her is about to cook her for dinner. After they catch her and carry her into the kitchen, she suddenly lays an egg, which transforms the family's attitude toward her: "Her heart, so small on a plate, made the feathers rise and fall, and filled that which would never be more than an egg with warmth.... Everyone ran to the kitchen again and, silent, stood in a circle around the new mother." The hen becomes "the queen of the house," a state of things that continues for an indeterminate period of time. The story's conclusion comes brutally, without warning: "Until one day they killed her and ate her and the years went by." In a passage that could almost be a parody of biographical criticism and its limitations, Moser reads this story as a fairly direct allegory of Lispector's own life: "The reference to the 'old fright of her species' suggests the ancestral Jewish fear of persecution, and the phrase 'remnants of the great escape,' coupled with the spectacle of a helpless, flightless, pregnant female running for her life, may refer to her mother's desperate escape from Europe." Such clunky analogies virtually destroy the experience of reading this story, since it derives its unique quality precisely from its sense of mystery—the thematic counterpoint that runs deeply below its surface, only occasionally breaking through.

This is even truer of "The Smallest Woman in the World," a beautiful and incomparably strange tale about love and motherhood. A French explorer in the Congo discovers a tribe of the world's smallest pygmies: "And—like a box within a box—obedient, perhaps, to the

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necessity nature sometimes feels of outdoing herself—among the smallest pygmies in the world there was the smallest of the smallest pygmies in the world." She is "seventeen and three-quarter inches high"—a wonderfully exact detail—and the man names her Little Flower. A life-size photograph of her is reproduced in all the Sunday supplements, and we get glimpses of the reactions of some of those who see it. A little girl of five, who up till now had been the smallest person in her household, realizes that "if this was the source of all caresses, it was also the source of the first fear of the tyranny of love." A little boy wants to keep her and play with her like a doll. His mother remembers a story she once heard about children in an orphanage:

> The orphans had no dolls, and, with terrible maternity already throbbing in their hearts, the little girls had hidden the death of one of the children from the nun. They kept the body in a cupboard and when the nun went out they played with the dead child, giving her baths and things to eat, punishing her only to be able to kiss and console her. In the bathroom, the mother remembered this, and let fall her thoughtful hands, full of curlers. She considered the cruel necessity of loving. And she considered the malignity of our desire for happiness. She considered how ferociously we need to play. How many times we will kill for love. Then she looked at her clever child as if she were looking at a dangerous stranger. And she had a horror of her own soul that, more than her body, had engendered that being, adept at life and happiness. She looked at him attentively and with uncomfortable pride, that child who had already lost two front teeth, evolution evolving itself, teeth falling out to give place to those that could bite better. "I'm going to buy him a new suit," she decided, looking at him, absorbed.

The language here is extraordinary: the vision of "terrible maternity" budding in the little girls, the mother's "thoughtful hands," the cruelty of evolution in its pursuit of teeth that can "bite better." Even considering the possibility that Bishop may have had a strong hand in the language, these uncanny images alone are sufficient to distinguish this story and its vision of motherhood, at once so universal and so mysterious. And the story ends with another abrupt twist that is surely all Lispector: a poetic meditation on Little Flower's own love for her discoverer, and then a final cut back to an old woman looking at the newspaper supplement: "God knows what He's doing," she remarks.

The end of Lispector's life took on a surreal quality not unlike the uncanny atmosphere of her stories. She developed an interest in the occult, and a friend of hers warned away a critic researching her with the words "It's not literature. It's witchcraft." Desperate for money, she quickly and sloppily translated popular novels, including Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*. She astonished both her interviewer and the camera crew during her only TV appearance by telling them: "For now I'm dead … I'm speaking from the tomb." Always vain, she hired a makeup artist to visit her regularly and apply some sort of semi-permanent makeup: apparently, he was instructed to do it even if she was knocked out by the sleeping pills on which she had long been dependent.

Everyone who knew Lispector, it seems, was enthralled by her beauty. The most famous comment about her is Gregory Rabassa's remark, upon meeting her in 1962, that she was "that rare person who looked like Marlene Dietrich and wrote like Virginia Woolf." Moser remarks, cruelly, that "Clarice liked being attractive more than she liked being a great writer." Whether or not this is true—and how could he know?—the relationship between her beauty and her writing was a complicated one. It seems meaningful, in this light, that she used the same word in her manifesto-essay "Novel," rejecting the idea of "attractive" prose. Writing beautifully, for Lispector, might have been just as easy as being beautiful—and thus, to her, just as useless. "Like every writer, I am clearly tempted to use succulent terms: I have at my command magnificent adjectives, robust nouns, and verbs so agile that they glide through the atmosphere," she wrote in *The Hour of the Star*, the last novel she published during her lifetime (another appeared posthumously).

But in deliberate ugliness there is no safety either. *The Hour of the Star* is, perhaps not coincidentally, one of Lispector's more conventional novels: the story of an ugly girl, trapped in a miserable job as a typist, abused by her boyfriend, who winds up getting run over by a car. "Nothing would persuade me to contaminate with brilliant, mendacious words a life as frugal as that of my typist," says the novel's narrator, a man named Rodrigo S. M., clearly a stand-in for the novelist, who says that he has grown weary of literature. "Silence alone comforts me. If I continue to write, it's because I have nothing more to accomplish in this world except to wait for death," he says. So he attempts, "contrary to my normal method, to write a story with a beginning, a middle, and a grand finale followed by silence and falling rain." It is the last resort of an exhausted man. But it is an apt ending to the career of a woman who tried to push fiction beyond its breaking point, and occasionally succeeded. ◆

Chapter for Removing Foolish Speech from the Mouth

Tuning in again to the long elaborate
talk of the dead, ear held to a glass held
to what's left of the world, I let them
lullaby me back to where it all got under-
way: sick day centered on a little bed,

papered walls my sphere, birdsong's
infinite punctures in air like tickertape
from the branches' fine interweaving.
I don't think to worry here whether half-
truths and music serve to reveal truth

or else only confuse it as stiff breezes
prove emphatic with their first purple
hyacinth and diesel. To what extent
stating a truth implies an endorsement
or when to embrace mere statement

means calling it true. I name the bees
sun's diplomats to an embassy of flowers
whether neighbors want me to or not.
Latest clouds in apricot coach my lips
through wordless chants against a purr

fuming from the nearby textile factory.
I'm not moving a muscle. Any exercise
to the tune of work will have to wait
for habit's stratocumulus to overcast this
puny light and need to stuff my mouth

with bargain cottons. When I'm done
I will be done, and the dead will come
riding their bone boomerang to return
me to that vertical life: tentative at first,
then all at once, as one might remove

red bandages at night, hands dutifully
maneuvering me forward as they take
me to task for having squandered so much
time on that sinkhole reverie I might
have invested in real estate or futures.

TIMOTHY DONNELLY

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Washington Diarist

Showdown

Since I have no reason to believe that Benjamin Netanyahu is bluffing about his readiness to attack the nuclear facilities of Iran, I find his recent behavior incomprehensible. In the wake of an Israeli attack, terrible things will almost certainly happen. There will be another war with Hezbollah, whose missiles will this time reach Tel Aviv. The Iranians may themselves respond directly with force. The price of oil will explode, afflicting ordinary people everywhere with the consequences of Israel's strike, and provoking a new revulsion against Israel, and also against the United States. And the only ally that Israel will have in that disordered and dangerous hour will be the United States. Otherwise it will be friendless. The American government will likely be infuriated by the attack, but there is a formidable tradition of American solidarity with Israel, all bickerings aside, that may mitigate its fury. Strategically speaking, therefore, Israel's relationship with the United States should be of supreme importance to its government. I myself am not persuaded of the wisdom of an Israeli attack on Iran—I do not see that it can accomplish its purpose: the only real solution is a democratic government in Tehran, secular and reasonable and transparent and intent on rescuing Iran from its modern adventure in medievalism—but I understand why Israel believes that it must damage and delay the nuclearization of this vicious and anti-Semitic tyranny. My disagreement on this question is uncharacteristically humble. But less humbly I insist that it is mad for Netanyahu to think that he can have it all: the strike on Iran, the steadfastness of America, the churlishness about a peace process, the apartments in Ramat Shlomo. In these strategic circumstances, Rabin and Sharon would have damned the apartments, and the small perspective that they represent. For all his lectures on history, Netanyahu lacks their historical amplitude. He cannot tear himself away from his numbers. I concur that Israel has the right to build in Ramat Shlomo: I have the right to jump off my building, which some of my Jewish readers may wish me to do, but it would not be the intelligent course of action. What most alarms me is that there has occurred in Israel an eerie loss of faith in the art of diplomacy. At this hour the Israeli government should be a hive of diplomatic creativity. It should be swarming with proposals and concepts: a map of its vision of Israel and Palestine; or a program of measures to strengthen the Fayyad-Abbas administration, because the alternative is Hamas, with its scriptures and rockets (I am not persuaded that the quiet on the Gazan frontier denotes anything more than the success of Israel's harsh campaign); or a draft of a West Bank-first agreement, with all the blandishments that it will bring to Palestinians in the West Bank, so that Palestinians in Gaza may eventually seek to enjoy them; or a plan for an interim armistice agreement of the sort that Ehud Yaari has described; or anything else that will demonstrate that Netanyahu's commitment to two states is designed to make peace also with Palestinians and not only with Americans. Instead I observe in the Israeli leadership a rigid and insensible attachment to the status quo, which consists in a prosperous high-tech contentment protected by a wall and a bi-annual war in the north or the south. Some of this status-quo-ism results from the pettiness of Israeli politics, which is what Obama rightly wishes to challenge; but some of it results from a despair of the world, to which Obama is callously indifferent. Netanyahu's ideal is no good: a normal life does not go with a despair of the world. He seems to regard Israel's unpopularity as evidence of the justice of its cause, and in this dirty world I half-see his point; but Israel is not an island. It would be a monumental failure of statecraft to lead his country into complete isolation.

Yet some intellectual pressure must be put also on Obama's airs, and on a central assumption behind his policy toward Israel. This assumption—one hears it in Washington all the time—is that our strategic objective must be to restore America's standing in the Muslim world. This is an article of faith in the anti-Bush catechism, which imputes all foreign enmities to Obama's predecessor. It contains an important element of truth: the United States has essential interests—and hundreds of thousands of troops—in Muslim lands, and insofar as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict complicates or harms those interests, the United States should desire it to be swiftly resolved. But the analysis cannot stop there. Is this prudence, or a doctrine for a realignment? And what, exactly, is the Muslim world? (Indonesia is not the rule, even if the president grew up there.) Which Muslims hate the United States, and which do not? Which of those anti-Americanisms are based upon American actions and alliances, and which are rooted in prior and autonomous beliefs that no American behavior will mollify? Which of those actions and alliances should be abandoned to realism, and which of them should be upheld as a matter of national honor, even if it drives realists crazy? (Driving realists crazy is God's work.) And there are still more questions. To what extent does the American aim of improving our reputation in various Muslim societies entail American acceptance of the current state of those societies? Is such an acceptance—say, Obama's creepy habit of addressing Muslims in religious terms, when there is no more urgent battle in "the Muslim world" than the battle for its secularization—not also a way of taking a side, a decidedly unprogressive side, in the struggle with, or against, modernity? And why, after the speech in Cairo, and after the showdown with Netanyahu, have the Iranians and the Saudis given Obama nothing? Perhaps they do not want what he wants. Perhaps they want what they want. How many clenched fists will it take to refute the extended hand? I want Israel to make peace with the Palestinians even more than Obama does, because I love the Jewish state and I fear for it; but because I love it and fear for it, Obama's adamant refusal to open his famously large heart to the depth of Israel's anxieties, to offer Israel the same "strategic reassurance" that he weirdly offered China, to recognize that his coldness toward Israel has the effect of confirming its delegitimation in many corners of the globe—his unmoved pursuit of perfect impartiality and a middle way, the whole Gautama Obama thing—repels me. It is also bad community organizing.

Leon Wieseltier

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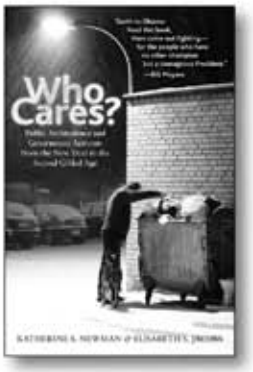

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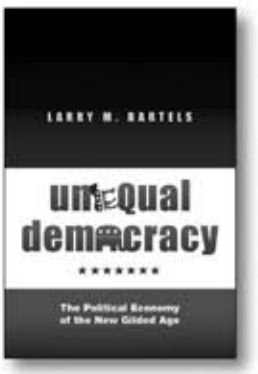

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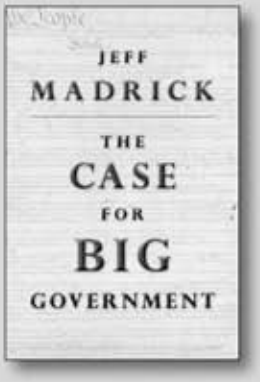

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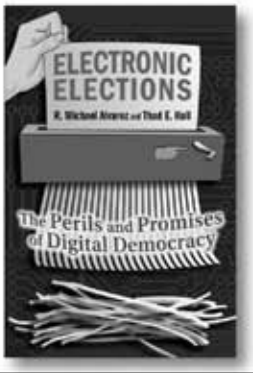

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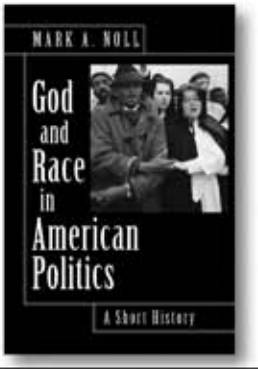

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